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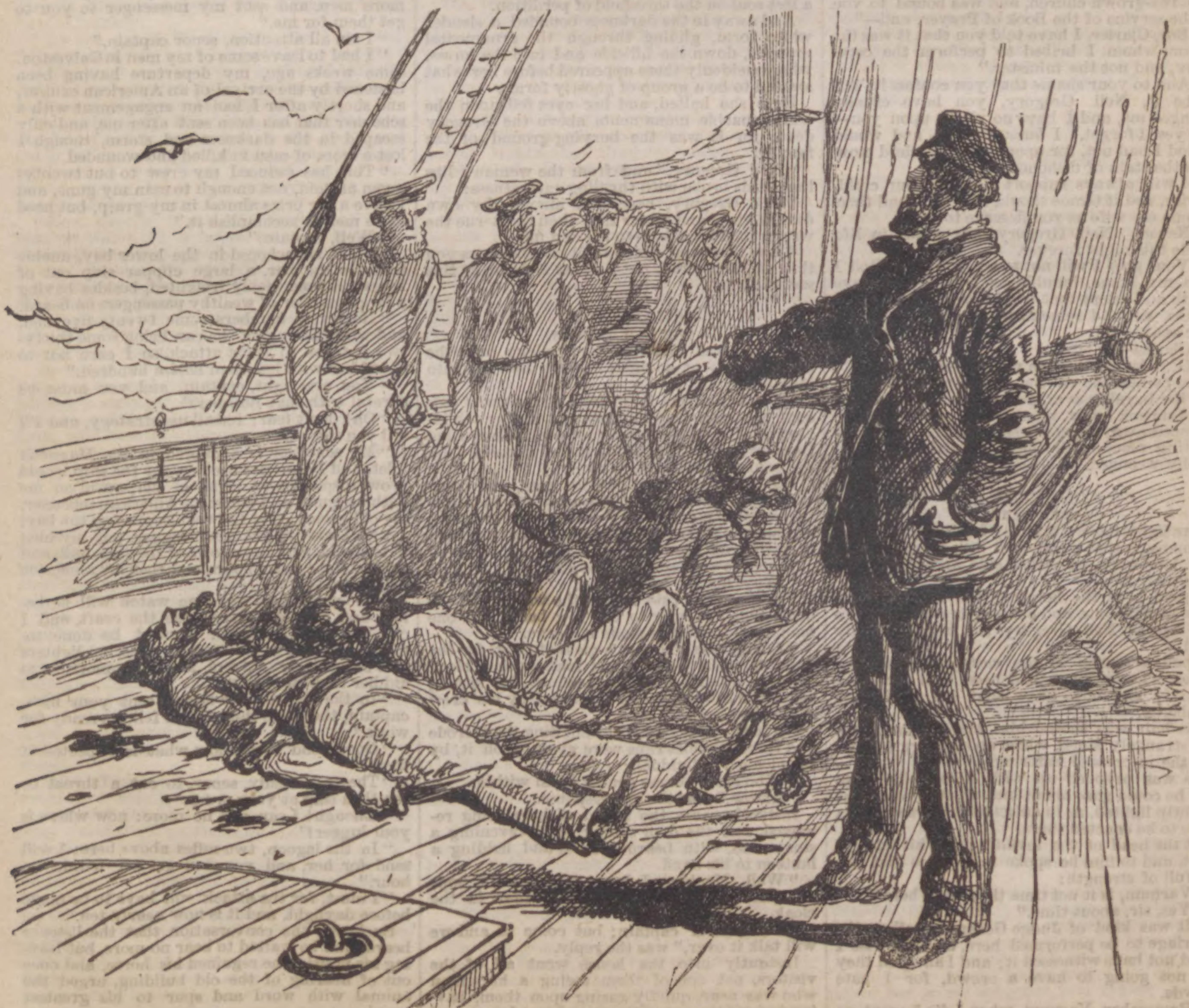
No. 162

The Mad Mariner; or, Dishonored and Disowned.

A SEA AND SHORE ROMANCE OF WRONG AND RETRIBUTION.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MONTEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "FREELANCE, THE BUCCANEER," "THE DARE DEVIL,"
"THE CRETAN ROVER," "THE PIRATE PRINCE," ETC., ETC.



"BO'SEN, THROW THESE MUTINEERS INTO THE SEA! DEAD AND LIVING! IT WILL WASH THE STAIN OF MUTINY FROM THIS CRAFT!"

The Mad Mariner;

OR,

Dishonored and Disowned.

A Sea and Shore Romance of Wrong and Retribution.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MON-
TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "CAPTAIN
KYD," "CORSAIR QUEEN," ETC.

PROLOGUE.

FALSE VOWS.

"DARE you, Neil Gregory, stand there before me, and in the sight of God, and say that you do not love me, and that you have done me a wrong you will never repair?"

The speaker was a woman, and one of extreme beauty of face and form, and she faced a man of striking appearance, and whose face paled as he met her piercing gaze fixed upon him, with a look that seemed to read his inmost soul.

The two stood beneath a linden tree, whose branches cast them half in shadow from the rays of the setting sun.

Behind them, some hundred yards away, and rustling amid evergreens, was a cosey cottage, and around them the scene was one of beauty, and lured to repose; but within their bosoms there was no quietude, for storms of emotion filled them.

"You misunderstand me, Clarice; I said not that I had ceased to love you, for I do love you with all my heart; but I am forced to give you up, to marry another, as it is the inexorable demand of my stern father," said the man in an embarrassed tone.

"Marry another? You, who once plighted your troth to me before God's altar, dare say this?" and the woman's voice was full of sarcasm.

"I have told you, Clarice, that I feared I would lose you, and so deceived you, and, had this marriage with Grace Gerard not been forced upon me, I would have, after the death of my father, claimed you as my wife, and had a legitimate ceremony performed."

"Legitimate ceremony, Neil Gregory? Why, I went in the stillness of night with you to that little ivy-grown church, and was bound to you by the service of the Book of Prayer, and—"

"But, Clarice, I have told you that it was the sexton, whom I bribed to perform the ceremony, and not the minister."

"And to your shame that you confess it; but so be it, Neil Gregory, you have cruelly wronged me, and I have no claim upon you—yes, yes, I forget. I have a claim, and would to God I had not, for upon my poor child now rests the stain of dishonor."

"I will always support you, and our child, Clarice, and if Grace should die, you shall then become my wife as you deserve to be."

"Never! Neil Gregory, our paths in life divide this night forever."

"Your gold I will not touch, for thank God I have my home, humble as it is, and I have health and talent that will bring me a support."

"Go, sir, and remember, never darken my door again."

"Clarice—"

"Go! else the woman will become the fiend." She pointed down the path, and one glance into her burning eyes, and the man of coward heart shrunk away, mounted his waiting horse and sped away from the spot that had been his trysting place with the poor girl he had so cruelly wronged.

CHAPTER I.

THE OATH.

THE lights flashed brightly forth, from a grand old mansion that stood on a hill, overlooking a vast landscape on either side and the rolling ocean in front.

It had been the home of the Gregorys for three generations, and ere long it was to pass to the fourth, Neil Gregory the heir and only child.

Upon a lounge in the vast parlor lay the father, who for years had been held down by paralysis, and now knew that his days were numbered.

His hair was snow-white, and his dark face was strangely stern, while upon every feature was the impress of suffering.

He was propped up with silken pillows, so that he could gaze about him, and the room was brightly lighted, as in anticipation of some gala scene to be enacted there.

At the head of the invalid stood his faithful valet, and to him he spoke in a voice that was yet full of strength:

"Varnum, is it not time they were here?"

"Yes, sir, about time."

"It was kind of Judge Gerard to allow the marriage to be performed here, as otherwise I could not have witnessed it; and I am glad they are not going to have a crowd, for I hate crowds."

"Remember, Varnum, when I die I want no

rude gazing upon me, or a large concourse of curious people to follow me to the grave.

"Let me be sent to my last rest in quiet, Varnum."

"Yes, sir, I will see to it."

"Hark! are not those the carriages coming?"

The valet stepped to the window and gazed out into the darkness, just as two vehicles rolled up to the large stairway and came to a halt.

"Yes, sir, they have arrived."

"Then call Master Neil."

The valet obeyed, and going into the hallway saw Neil Gregory descend from the floor above and advance to meet the visitors.

In they came: first an elderly, dignified gentleman with a kindly face, and having on his arm a young and beautiful maiden, whose head was bowed as she entered.

Next came an elderly lady, leaning on the arm of a gentleman whose appearance indicated that he was a clergyman, while bringing up the rear were a youth of eighteen and young girl of sixteen, whose resemblance to the maiden in advance proved conclusively that they stood to her in the relationship of brother and sister.

The party were all in full evening dress, and advancing toward them Neil Gregory greeted them with a courtly grace that seemed natural to him, and while the housekeeper led the ladies to their rooms, he ushered the gentlemen into the vast parlor where his father lay, helpless and dying, for it was evident that his sufferings were near an end, and that his pain-tortured body would soon find rest.

A short delay, and the clergyman took his stand in the center of the room, and the bridegroom and bride stood before him, and a hush fell upon all.

The bride, as beautiful as a poet's dream of pure womanhood, was flushed and trembling, while Neil Gregory was calm, but as white as a corpse.

Had he seen a pallid, haggard, fierce face pressed against the window-pane, and her form crouching down without in the darkness, his coward heart would have broken all restraint, and caused him to go beyond the bounds of self-control.

At last the words were spoken that made Grace Gerard the wife of Neil Gregory, and then there broke forth from without a shriek so wild and piercing, so full of anguish and of despair commingled, that it seemed like the cry of a lost soul on the threshold of perdition.

And away in the darkness bounded a slender white form, gliding through the ornamental grounds, down the hillside and into the forest, where suddenly there appeared before her what seemed to be a group of ghostly forms.

Here she halted, and her eyes fell upon the white marble monuments above the Gregory dead, for it was the burying-ground of the family.

"Neil Gregory," and from the woman's lips the words broke with thrilling earnestness:

"Neil Gregory, here, and among thy own dead, I kneel and swear that thou shalt rue the wrong thou hast done to me and mine."

"Ay, thou and thine shall rue the vows you this night uttered, for I swear it here in this sacred spot."

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD TAVERN.

A BOAT was stealing quietly along over the dark waters of a small stream flowing into Mobile Bay.

So noiseless was its motion, that it was evident the oars were muffled, and it was the intention of her commander to avoid observation from any of the plantation homes situated upon the banks of the inlet, or river.

The boat was crowded with men, and not a word was spoken, until it was guided in to the shore, at a point where was visible a large, rambling old structure, that appeared to have in years past been a tavern.

Then a low deep voice said sternly:

"Way 'nough, lads!"

The oars were raised from the water, and the boat glided silently to the low bank, and one man sprung out and made it secure.

"Come, lads, and get a glass of grog, for the night is chilly," said a tall man, with a cloak thrown around his shoulders, as he sprung ashore, and was eagerly followed by his crew of fourteen men.

Up to the door of the old building they strode and three distinct raps were given upon it, by the cloaked individual.

"Who calls?" came gruffly from within.

"Arrow," was the low response.

Instantly came the sound of bars being removed, and the door swung open, revealing a stout man, with bearded face, and holding a lantern in his hand.

"Well, Machino, I have come, and I hope you are ready for me," said the man in the cloak.

"I am, senior captain; but come in and we will talk it over," was the reply.

Instantly into the house went all of the visitors, not one of them seeing a horseman who was near, quietly gazing upon them, having just ridden out of the moss-hung forest, and

drawn rein in the shadows, as he beheld the group of men advance from the boat and approach the old building.

"That means mischief," muttered the horseman.

"I have heard of bands of smugglers, and even pirates, having their rendezvous hereabouts, and it would not surprise me if yonder old tavern were a nest for them."

"I will reconnoiter, before I ask for shelter for the night."

He rode up to the side of the old house, the hoofs of his horse giving back no sound in the deep sand, and halting, he listened attentively.

"He heard the hum of voices within, and saw in an upper room a dim light, which he knew had been just taken there, as all had been dark before."

Drawing himself up from his saddle, into the branches of a tree overhead, he managed to get upon the roof of the piazza, and creeping along it noiselessly, he glanced through the window out of which the rays of light came.

It was a small room, poorly furnished with a cot bed, table and two chairs, and the latter were occupied.

Upon one side of the table sat the tall man who had come from the boat, and he had thrown his cloak upon the cot, while opposite to him was the stout individual who had opened the door to admit him.

The window was boarded up but through the cracks the one on the roof could see all that occurred within, and also hear every word that was said, as several panes of glass were broken out.

One glance into the faces of the two men at the table was enough to show that they led bold, reckless lives, had not their conversation told the listener as much.

"Well, captain, what's up, that you need such a large force of men?" asked the stout man, as he drew a cork from a bottle, and placed it with two glasses upon the table.

"I'll try your wine first, Machino, for my throat is full of salt spray; ah, this is good indeed," answered the one addressed as captain, and who was attired in a uniform, and wore a sword and pistol.

"It should be good, Captain Cloud, for it came from old Spain and never paid duty to the Government either."

"I'll warrant not, Senior Machino, if it comes from your cellar; but I'll tell you why I want more men, and sent my messenger to you to get them for me."

"I am all attention, senior captain."

"I had to leave some of my men in Galveston, some weeks ago, my departure having been hastened by the arrival of an American cruiser, and shortly after I had an engagement with a schooner that has been sent after me, and only escaped in the darkness and storm, though I lost a score of men in killed and wounded."

"This has reduced my crew to but twenty-seven all told, not enough to man my guns, and I have a big prize almost in my grasp, but need more men to accomplish it."

"Well, captain?"

"There is anchored in the lower bay, unable to cross the bar, a large clipper ship out of Liverpool, and richly freighted, besides having a large number of wealthy passengers on board."

"Her crew numbers some twenty-five men, and with passengers she can bring some thirty-two or three to resist attack, so I care not to board her with less than half a hundred."

"You are right, captain, and you must be careful with that number."

"Oh! don't fear: I shall use strategy, and I'll tell you my plan:

"My schooner is anchored in the Magnolia inlet, and I dare not use her, for the ship would grow suspicious at sight of her, open on me with her guns, and alarm an American schooner, my old enemy, that lies two leagues up the bay."

"So I wish to get your lugger, put my men in the hold, run down toward the ship, hail, and ask for some extra spars, and then lay alongside and board."

"The passengers and one watch will be below, and we can easily seize the craft, and I can tell you, Machino, it must be done to-night, for I have no time to lose, as lighters will be sent down from Mobile to-morrow to aid her to cross the bar."

"In the tap-room where I sent your men, captain, there are thirty good fellows ready for work."

"Good! and they know what is expected of them?"

"They are ready, senior, to cut a throat or scuttle a ship at your order."

"Enough! I can ask no more: now where is your lugger?"

"In the lagoon, two miles above here; I will send for her, and you can get off within an hour."

"I must, for the attack will have to be made before daylight, and it is now nearly ten."

Such was the conversation that the listener heard, and he waited to hear no more, but leaving his position he regained his horse, and once out of hearing of the old building, urged the animal with word and spur to his greatest speed.

CHAPTER III.

WELCOME VISITORS.

THE clipper-ship *Monarch* lay at anchor in Mobile Bay, the waves, fanned into motion by a six-knot breeze, hardly moving her massive hull.

Upon her decks, besides the watch on duty, were several passengers pacing to and fro, or leaning over the taffrail and gazing out over the dark waters, and thinking of the morrow which would place them once more on land after a long sea voyage.

"There's a sail coming down upon our star-board bow, sir," said the look-out, addressing the officer on duty.

"Ay, ay," and the night-glass was leveled at the stranger.

"It is a small fishing smack, I think; but she seems heading directly toward us," said the officer, closely examining the craft.

All on deck now attentively watched the stranger, which was visible a quarter of a mile away, and heading directly for the ship.

"If she was larger, and came from seaward, I'd be suspicious of her in these waters, Martin," said the captain, coming on deck and closely eying the little vessel, from whose decks a short while after came a hail in a low, but clear voice.

"Ship ahoy!"

"Ahoy the smack!" answered the captain.

"Is that the clipper ship *Monarch*?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"I have a message for you, sir."

"Come alongside!"

The smack ran close in, was skillfully laid alongside the ship, over whose bulwarks clambered a man in the uniform of a naval officer, and who, after saluting Captain Bruno of the *Monarch*, said in a low tone:

"I am Midshipman Marmaduke Gregory, sir, of the American schooner of war *Red Wing*, and having learned of an intended attack on you to-night, have with me two-score gallant lads to aid in the defense of your vessel."

"You surprise me, my dear sir," said the amazed captain.

"You will be more surprised, sir, soon, so pray let my men at once board and go below, while the smack runs inshore, and I will explain more fully."

The merchant captain looked fixedly into the face of the officer, as the binnacle light shone upon it, and seeing that it was a face to trust, he said frankly:

"As you please, Mr. Gregory, for I am confident you have a good motive in your request."

"You shall soon see, sir," answered the officer, and going to the ship's side he called over to those on the smack to come on board.

Instantly over the bulwarks clambered a number of sailors, all armed to the teeth, and going forward they descended into the steerage, while at an order from the midshipman, the smack swung loose from the *Monarch*, and headed toward the nearest shore.

"Now, captain, if you will order your look-outs to watch for a lugger coming from the shore off your port quarter, and report it to you as soon as sighted, I will make known to you why I have paid you this unceremonious visit," said the midshipman.

"Come, sir, into my cabin, please," and Captain Bruno led the way into the ship's large and comfortable cabin.

There was but one occupant there, a maiden seated at the table reading, and who, upon beholding a stranger, arose and retreated to the state-room followed by the eyes of the midshipman, who seemed evidently impressed by the vision of loveliness upon which his gaze had so unexpectedly and but momentarily rested.

"Holy Neptune! but is she not beautiful?" he muttered, and hearing his words, the captain, with a smile said:

"You but express the universal verdict, Mr. Gregory; it is Miss Eva Raymond, the daughter of the owner of this vessel, and a wealthy merchant of Baltimore; but I am ready, sir, to hear what you have to say."

"Ah! yes, captain; as I told you I am a midshipman, and acting lieutenant on board the schooner of war *Red Wing*, whose special orders are to find and capture the famous pirate known as Captain Cloud of the *Arrow*.

"Yesterday, desiring to visit a friend, who has a plantation a few leagues down the coast, I was landed near where he lived, intending to drive up with him in a day or two and rejoin my vessel.

"But, after the schooner had sailed, to my chagrin, I found my friend and his family absent, so I obtained a horse to ride on to the city, and to-night accidentally made a discovery of an important nature.

"Shortly after dark I came upon an old building, that appeared to have once been a tavern, and just as I reached there, I saw a party of men land from a boat, whose approach I had not noticed, owing to the oars being muffled.

Halting in the shadow of the trees I saw them enter the tavern, after giving as a password the one word *Arrow*, and my suspicions being aroused I gained a roof, and through a broken window saw two men, one of whom was

the landlord of the place, and the other Captain Cloud himself."

"You surprise me, sir," cried the merchant captain in amazement.

"And what I heard, Captain Bruno, will surprise you more, for it was a plot to take your vessel to-night."

"Finding out thus their plan, I retreated to my horse and dashed at full speed along the shore road until I came in sight of the lights of the *Red Wing*, which I hailed, and a boat was sent for me, and I made known to Lieutenant Donald in command, what I had heard and asked to take some men, board you, and lay in wait for the pirates.

"He readily granted my request, and a fishing-smack lying near, we pressed it into service, and here I am."

"And right glad am I to see you, Mr. Gregory, for I know well that daring, red-handed pirate, and I could not bring more than twenty men to resist his attack, as some of my crew are down sick."

"But with your force, and myself and men are under your command, sir, we can—"

"A lugger is in sight, sir, coming from the port quarter," called out the mate down the companionway, and his words brought the captain and the midshipman quickly to their feet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTACK.

UPON reaching the deck both Captain Bruno and Midshipman Gregory saw the lugger coming slowly toward the ship, and the merchant commander asked:

"Do you think that is your friend, Mr. Gregory?"

"Yes, I am confident of it, for he comes directly out of the mouth of the lagoon, on which stands the old tavern."

"Then, sir, arrange your forces to suit yourself, and I report with my crew for duty, and am confident some of the passengers will volunteer to aid us."

Midshipman Gregory at once laid his plans to resist the attack of the pirates, and at the same time to capture the entire party.

Under the mate he placed twenty men, of his own crew, to be ready to board the lugger as soon as the freebooters had boarded the ship, and thus cut off their escape.

The rest of the defenders, consisting of the remainder of his own men, the ship's crew and the passengers, he divided into two companies, one under the command of Captain Bruno and the other to be under his special charge, while he also was to answer the hail of the lugger, and bid them come alongside.

As all the arrangements were now completed, and the three parties concealed and ready for action, Midshipman Gregory walked aft, and gazed calmly at the approaching lugger, now not many cable-lengths away.

"Well, sir, I believe you are the one to whom I owe the safety of my vessel, so I beg you to permit me to aid you in any way," said an elderly gentleman, who had just come from the cabin, and carried a cutlass in his hand.

"I learned of an intended attack upon the *Monarch*, sir, and hope it will be not only repulsed, but the assailants captured; you are Mr. Raymond, I believe?" was the midshipman's answer.

"Yes, sir, Walter Raymond, and I am happy in meeting you, Mr. Gregory, and trust you will assign me to duty."

"Then it shall be to guard the cabin, sir, as some of the pirates will be certain to make for that point, and if I mistake not the most precious freight the ship carries is there."

"True, sir, for my child is there, and—"

"Ship ahoy!"

The sharp hail broke off further conversation between the merchant and the midshipman, and the latter replied promptly:

"Ahoy the lugger!"

"We have lost our spars, and beg you to let us have some if you can," came the reply in a hoarse voice.

The lugger was now quite near, and upon her deck in the darkness only three persons could be seen by the keen eyes of the midshipman; but he felt confident that beneath her decks were half a hundred red-handed pirates ready for the vilest deeds.

"Ay, ay, I will see what we can do for you," was the calm response, and then added:

"Send a boat alongside."

"We have no boat; we lost it in the storm two nights ago, when our spars went too."

"Then lay alongside with your lugger."

"Ay, ay, sir," came with almost quarter-deck promptness, and skillfully handled, the lugger came alongside the huge ship, and instantly came in the ringing tones of the Pirate Chief:

"Throw your grapnels, men! now follow me all!"

The iron grapnels were cast at the word and caught on the ship, and then over the high bulwarks came a swarm of dark-faced, evil-hearted men, silent and determined, and at their head was their tall chief, no longer wearing his cloak, but ready for action.

Once on the deck and all came to a sudden halt.

There was not one of the ship's crew visible and not an alarm had been given.

What could it mean?

Had the vessel been in charge of one man, and he in terror fled?

But out of the shelter of the poop deck came a stirring cry:

"Fire!"

Lying flat on the deck the well-trained crew of Midshipman Gregory obeyed the command, and a dozen pirates fell in their tracks.

"At them, lads!"

This order, too, was quickly obeyed, and from fore and aft rushed the ship's defenders, while the mate with his force threw themselves on board the lugger and took possession.

Taken wholly by surprise, the pirates at first seemed dumb with amazement.

But their chief soon rallied, and loud his voice rung out:

"Devils, we are caught in our own trap, but fight it out."

A yell answered, and the pirates met the attack bravely.

But seeing that they were being pressed hard from both fore and aft, and that he was outnumbered by far, the pirate leader called out:

"One hard blow, ye devils, and then to the lugger, for we've caught a Tartar."

The pirates did deal a severe blow, and then turned to retreat, when those who sprung upon the bulwarks to jump down upon the lugger fell dead upon its decks, for Martin and his band met them with a hot fire.

"Fight it out! die by steel and bullet rather than by the rope," shouted the chief, and he sprung forward, cutlass in hand, and dealt a savage blow at Midshipman Gregory, who was pressing him hard.

But with consummate skill the blow was caught on the blade of the midshipman, and at once the fight between the two leaders became hot and fierce.

But only for a moment did it last, and then the buccaneer was disarmed.

"Complete your work, sir," he said, calmly, folding his arms, as the midshipman struck his cutlass from his grasp.

"No, I prefer to leave that to the hangman, Captain Cloud," was the cool reply.

"Hail you know me?"

"Yes, as a bloodthirsty monster whose red career is about ended."

"Hold! men, cut not those down who cry for quarter," he called out in loud tones, and instantly a chorus of cries for mercy went up from the beaten buccaneers, and the victory was won.

CHAPTER V.

A DOUBLE REWARD.

"WELL, Midshipman Gregory, your victory is most complete indeed, and from my heart I thank you," and Mr. Raymond advanced and grasped the hand of the young naval officer, who answered modestly:

"Oh, no, sir, it is not half finished yet, for the pirate schooner remains to be taken, and then there is a den ashore I shall visit."

"Ah, you have a chance then to capture the schooner?" said Captain Bruno, coming aft.

"Yes, sir, for I know where she lies at anchor, and I shall go at once in the lugger."

"Before you go, sir, permit me to offer you my hand in friendship for what you have this night done."

Marmaduke Gregory started as the low, sweet voice met his ear, and turning, beheld the beautiful face and form of Eva Raymond before him.

"I but did my duty, Miss Raymond; but I am more than happy that in so doing I have won your friendship," he answered, with feeling.

"Mr. Gregory, you know not from what you have saved me, for I know well the main motive in Captain Cloud's attacking this vessel: it was to revenge himself upon my father and myself, and I shudder to think of all that might have happened but for you."

"Captain Cloud sought revenge on you, Miss Raymond?" asked the young officer in surprise.

"Yes, for three years ago he was a man in society in Baltimore, and supposed to be honorable."

"But he committed the crime of forgery, using my father's name, and because I refused his love swore to be revenged upon me."

"He knew this vessel, as he was on board of her as a guest, when she was launched, and meant that we should be the victims of his cruel hate, and again I thank you, Mr. Gregory."

Deeply impressed with what the maiden said, Marmaduke Gregory, returned some half-audible reply, and turned to the captain, whom he begged to take charge of the prisoners, and keep them on board until he should call for them, which would be as soon as he had captured the pirate schooner, and raided the old tavern.

Calling his men together they boarded the

ligger, and it sped away, followed by many a kindly wish for success.

Knowing where the anchorage of the schooner was, the midshipman headed directly for the Magnolia Lagoon, and under a seven-knot breeze, ran into the mouth of the stream within an hour after leaving the ship.

A short distance up the sluggish and black waters of the lagoon, and the keen eye of the midshipman detected the schooner lying close inshore.

So satisfied was the look-out that no danger threatened them in that secure retreat, that he had settled himself down on the deck, with his back against the bulwarks, for a comfortable nap, not expecting his chief back before daylight, while the few men left on the craft to hold her, had turned in for a sleep.

But they were awakened by the sound of feet trampling upon the deck, and as the look-out sprung to his feet in alarm, he fell back dead, cut down by a cutlass in the hand of Midshipman Gregory, who had been the first to spring on board.

A few shots, a few cries for mercy, and the Arrow was in the hands of the young officer, and sail was at once made on her, and both vessels headed out of the lagoon.

Once out of the stream, and a large schooner was sighted coming down the bay under full sail.

"It is the Red Wing," called out Marmaduke Gregory from the lugger on board of which he had remained, and then he continued, addressing a brother midshipman he had placed in command of the schooner.

"Hold on, Mayfield, and signal the Red Wing and report, while I run on up the creek yonder and look in on mine host of the old tavern, for I wish to reach there by dawn."

The Arrow at once stood away across the course of the Red Wing, which had not sighted her, or the lugger, they being close in under the land, while, with but a score of men with him, the midshipman headed into the mouth of the creek.

Once wrapped in by the moss-hung trees, and the wind did not reach them, so the sweeps were gotten out and the lugger was forced up the stream until just as daylight appeared the old tavern came in sight.

Around it all was bleak and dismal, though some years before, being on the highway between New Orleans and Mobile, it had once been a favorite resting-place. A breach of the sea, however, forcing the travel further inland, the old place had gone to decay, and eventually its proprietor, Senor Jose Machino, a Spanish-American, had turned smuggler, and become the ally of pirates.

Springing ashore, and throwing the cloak of the Pirate Chief around him, Marmaduke Gregory advanced to the door and gave on it the requisite number of knocks, as the buccaneer had done.

But Senor Machino slept sound after his night of wakefulness, and the potations he had drunk, and it took considerable rapping to arouse him.

Glancing out he saw the lugger at the bank, but no one on board, and with a chuckle of glee, hastened down to the door.

But Senor Machino was a cautious man, and before unbarring the portal he asked as was his custom:

"Who comes?"

"The Arrow," answered the midshipman's deep tones.

Instantly the door was opened, and Senor Jose Machino started back with a cry of of horror, his hand upon his knife.

But the point of the midshipman's sword was pressed over his heart, and he heard the stern words:

"Senor, you are my prisoner."

"What means this outrage?" yelled the infuriated and frightened landlord, in a voice that was evidently intended to alarm the other inmates of the old building.

"It means, senor, that I'll swing you up to yonder tree if you utter another word."

"Here, Baldwin, guard him, and kill him if he attempts to escape. Come, men, follow me!" and the midshipman dashed into the building, and up the rickety stairs.

An old woman, a dark-faced girl of sixteen, with Gipsy-like beauty, an aged sailor with one leg and a trio of negroes, with a vast quantity of smuggled goods hidden in the attic, were the result of the capture of the tavern, and with his prisoners and his booty, the midshipman set sail for Mobile in the lugger, right well pleased with his night's work.

Arriving at Mobile, whither the two schooners and the Monarch, lightered over the bar, had already preceded him, Marmaduke Gregory, in honor of his gallant services, was placed in command of the Arrow, with a prize crew, and ordered to carry her to Washington and report to the Government his capture, and, anxious to return home, Mr. Raymond and his daughter took advantage of the invitation of the midshipman to accompany him in the pretty schooner, for Captain Cloud had a most luxurious cabin.

The prisoners also were heavily ironed and put on board to go to Washington for trial, and

with a fair breeze the Arrow set sail, and, in spite of a desire on the part of her young commander to make a slow passage, arrived in remarkably quick time to an anchorage in the Potomac.

And in that time, Cupid had shot his love-arrows deep into the hearts of Marmaduke Gregory and Eva Raymond, and they had learned to love each other with almost idolatrous intensity.

But upon reaching his home, Mr. Raymond, the once wealthy merchant, found that, during his year's absence abroad, bitter reverses had befallen him, and ruin was upon him.

Even his handsome home had been taken from him, and almost a pauper, he was left with his daughter to the mercies of a friendless world.

This sad news Eva at once wrote to Marmaduke Gregory, and released him from his engagement to her; but quickly he left the scene where he was being lionized for his gallant service in capturing the famous pirate captain Cloud, and hastening by stage to Baltimore, secured for the father and daughter pleasant quarters, and so earnestly urged upon Eva to at once become his wife, that she consented.

"All will be well, Eva," he said with enthusiasm, "for I have been promoted to a lieutenantcy, and am to be sent off in command of the Arrow, on a cruise in the Gulf, and upon my return I will carry you to old Massachusetts and introduce my father to my beautiful bride, while in the mean time, I have my prize money for your father to invest as he deems best."

But, in preparing his vessel for sea, attending the trial of the pirates, and other duties, it was several months before Lieutenant Gregory was able to put to sea, and he by no means regretted the delay, as it enabled him to spend his honeymoon with his beautiful bride, and see her father and herself comfortably situated in their new home.

But one morning he received orders to at once put to sea, for Captain Cloud and half of his men had made their escape, and the Government felt confident the pirate chief would return to his old haunts and red work once more.

Bidding farewell to his wife and her father, Marmaduke Gregory set sail from his native land, little dreaming what the future held in store for him.

CHAPTER VI. THE RETURN.

"WELL, Nevil, as this storm has driven us so far to the northward, and we are within twenty leagues of my home, I shall take the opportunity of running in and making a visit to my father, whom I have not seen for four years," and Lieutenant Marmaduke Gregory turned to his first officer, a passed midshipman, who had been with him on his two years' cruise on the Arrow, which had been taken from the pirates.

In the two years that had passed, since he sailed from the Potomac for the Gulf of Mexico, the young officer had won new laurels at sea; but not once had he been able to return to visit his young bride, from whom however he had heard every few months, when touching some southern seaport.

His father too he had not seen for four years, and it was no wonder that he longed to visit the old mansion by the sea, and to know how he had received his wife and child, for he had written to Eva to go to his father and tell him that she was his wife, feeling assured that she would be warmly welcomed.

Shaping his course for the part of the coast, on which stood the grand old home of his ancestors, the young officer waited anxiously for the loved hills to come in sight, and it was with a glad heart that he at last caught a view of the tower of the mansion, and just at sunset dropped anchor and ordered a boat alongside to row him to the shore.

At last he sprang out upon the rocky shore, and alone started up the path he knew so well, from having traversed it many and many a time in boyhood.

The moon rode in a cloudless sky and lighted his way, and with an emotion he could hardly restrain from breaking out into shouts, as in the olden time, when he had returned from a sail, he walked on with rapid stride.

"I know my father gave Eva and my child, and also Mr. Raymond a warm welcome, and that my sister greeted her as my sister should greet my wife."

"Poor Mr. Raymond! misfortune seemed to dog his footsteps, and his losses doubtless impaired his mind; but as my father's heir I will have ample for all, and besides, my prize money is not inconsiderable."

And on he went, speaking aloud his thoughts, until he came to the wall, bordering one side of the highway, and opposite to which was the massive gateway leading into the grounds of the estate.

Springing nimbly over the stone wall, he approached the gate, and started, at suddenly beholding there a form, clad in deep black.

"Do not start, sir, I am only a poor old woman who was strolling along the highway, and paused to look up at yonder handsome man-

sion," and the woman stepped before him, and he saw a sad, pale face and white hair that seemed to indicate age.

"Why Mrs. Bond! is this you?" he exclaimed, stretching forth his hand at recognizing her.

"Duke!" she almost shrieked, and springing forward she seemed about to cast herself upon his broad breast, and throw her arms around his neck; but checking herself suddenly she dropped her head and said sadly:

"Forgive me, Mr. Gregory; but you remember I was your old nurse in the long ago, and I forgot myself."

"You need ask no forgiveness of me, Mammy Bond, for never can I forget your great kindness to me as a boy; but tell me, are all well up at the mansion, and have you been well and happy?"

"Of those at the mansion I know nothing, Duke; but myself I can speak of and say, that as usual, I am sick at heart though well in body."

"My home is down yonder in the glen, and there you will be ever welcome, should you care to visit me there."

"You have grown to be a splendid man, Master Duke, and have won a name that makes your old nurse proud of you; but good-night, Master Duke, for I know you are anxious to cross the threshold of the old mansion."

She held forth her hand and grasping it warmly, he found it icy cold and trembling violently, and said:

"I fear you are not well, Mammy Bond, and to-morrow I shall run down to see you and bring some one with me too; good-night," and rapidly he walked on, ascended the broad stairway of stone, and gave the brass lion-head knocker a heavy rap.

A step was heard within, and the door opening a gray-haired butler in livery appeared.

"Why Burton, how are you?" cried the young officer gayly, stretching forth his hand.

"Pretty well, sir; do you wish to see Judge Townsend, sir?" was the cool reply of the butler.

"Judge Townsend be hanged, Burton; I wish to see my father, my wife, my child and my sister."

"Your father is dead, sir."

"Dead!" gasped the young officer, staggering back and leaning against the door-post.

"Yes, sir, he is dead, and your wife and child are not here; but Judge Townsend and your sister are, and I will make known to them your coming."

There was that in the tone and manner of the old butler that sent a cold thrill through the heart of Duke Gregory, and unable to utter a word he stood trembling and waiting, as though he stood upon the verge of a burning volcano that threatened him with more than death.

CHAPTER VII. DISOWNED.

UPON the threshold of his own home for a moment Duke Gregory stood like a statue, while the liveried butler went forward and threw open the library door, at the same time announcing in a loud tone to those within:

"Lieutenant Marmaduke Gregory."

The shock at hearing of his father's death had momentarily unmanned the brave youth, and the knowledge that he was not to find in his home his wife and baby child, aided in unnerving him; but now, at the pompous and cold manner and greeting of Burton the butler, he regained with an effort his self-control, and said sternly:

"What means this silly ceremony, sir! Stand aside and let me pass."

The butler caught his stern eyes fixed upon him, and quickly stepped aside, while the young officer strode into the brilliantly-lighted library.

There was but one person within; a man of forty-five, and a cold, hard face and cunning eyes, seated in an easy-chair at the side of a table, engaged in reading, until the butler's announcement caused him to glance quickly around at the door.

He beheld a tall, elegantly-formed young man of twenty-four, clad in a full-dress lieutenant's uniform, and with a face that was full of character and intellect, and decidedly good-looking.

It had been years since the two had met, Judge Leroy Townsend and Duke Gregory, and then the latter was a mere boy in years; but each recognized the other at a glance.

"Walk in, sir, and be seated," said the lawyer coldly.

"If I mistake not," answered Duke Gregory, nettled by the other's manner, "I am the host, you the guest, sir, in this house."

"Permit me to say, Lieutenant Marmaduke Gregory, that you do mistake, sir, for I am master here," was the sneering reply.

"You / in God's name what do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

"If I remember aright you were my father's attorney; may I ask how it is I find you claiming to be master of this house?"

"This house, sir, was left by your father to his daughter and heiress, Grace Gregory, who is now my wife, sir," was the smiling response.

"Great God! my father dead, and poor Grace your wife; there has been indeed some damn-

able trickery here, and by Heaven I will ferret it out," was the angry retort.

"Your language, Lieutenant Gregory, is most insulting, and if repeated, I will have you kicked out of my house."

Hardly were the words uttered than the lawyer regretted their utterance, for springing forward, as a tiger upon his prey, Duke Gregory seized the lawyer by the throat, shook him violently, and hurling him to the floor placed his foot upon him, while he hissed forth:

"Dog, do you dare make such a threat to me?"

"Help! Burton! Grace! ho all! help!" yelled the frightened lawyer, for he saw that the hand of Duke Gregory was upon his sword-hilt.

Instantly the hall door opened and the butler and another servant appeared with alarm in their faces; but they fell back before the stern face and flashing eyes of the young officer, who cried:

"Leave the room, for I mean the base coward no harm."

They fell back, seemingly with willingness, and closed the door behind them, where Duke Gregory, removing his foot from the breast of the prostrate man, said sternly:

"Now rise, Leroy Townsend, and tell me what all this means, that I am insulted in my own house, and beware not to offer insult, or by Heaven! I'll give you cause to regret it, for I am in no mood to be trifled with."

The lawyer slowly arose to his feet, his face white and his lips quivering, and having learned a lesson, he said in a low tone:

"It means, sir, that Mr. Neil Gregory, your father, disowned you before he died."

"You lie, sir! in your false throat you lie!" cried Duke Gregory, savagely.

"I speak the truth, sir, upon my honor."

"And I say you lie, for my father never did me this wrong."

"And I say he does not lie; your father did disown you, Duke Gregory."

The speaker was a woman, and she swept into the library with majestic mien, and confronted the young seaman.

CHAPTER VIII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"GRACE! great God! have you too turned against me?"

The cry, for such it was, and one of deepest pathos, was addressed to the woman who had so suddenly entered the library, and fell from the lips of Duke Gregory.

It was his sister Grace, and in giving birth to her children, for they were twins, the mother had sacrificed her own life.

Lovely in face and form Grace certainly was; and yet in her beautiful eyes, in repose, dwelt a look of coldness and selfishness, while her manner was haughty even to her equals.

Reared without a mother's influence, and by an indulgent father to her, she had become an empress in her own home, and her beauty and expected wealth bringing her hosts of suitors, she had ruled in society as well.

Clothed in an evening wrapper, which showed plainly that the cry of the judge had brought her from the seclusion of her own room, she, before entering, had discovered who was present, and had heard the words of her husband.

In answer to the earnest, appealing query of her brother Grace said coldly:

"When you know, sir, if you do not already know, the cause of my cold reception of you, even you can see that it is but just."

"Grace, your words madden me, and I appeal to your inmost heart to tell me what all this means."

"Your father left in the hands of my husband a document for your especial reading, Lieutenant Gregory, and I beg you to go to Judge Townsend for an explanation," was the cold reply.

"Answer me one question: is this man your husband?" and Duke Gregory pointed with withering scorn in his look to the judge.

"He is; we were married four months ago."

"And my poor father is dead?" he asked, sadly.

"He is."

"When did he die?"

"Six months ago."

"And left me no word?"

"I have told you that he disowned you, and left in Judge Townsend's hand papers for your especial reading."

"Disowned me?"

"Yes."

"I cannot believe it."

"You will find it true, Duke Gregory."

"I have committed no crime."

"That depends upon your idea of what crime may be."

"What mean you, Grace?"

"Read the papers left for you."

"I have always been a dutiful son, and I felt such joy in coming home to win his praise, and yours."

"You have won a name, yes, and it may stand you well, for you will need it."

"And again I ask you to explain?"

"My wife suggests, sir, that the papers I

hold will be more explanation than you may possibly desire," said the judge.

"Silence, sir, or I shall be tempted to—"

"Hold! Duke Gregory, this is my home, and I shall allow no high-handed bravado here," cried the woman.

"And Grace Gregory, or Grace Townsend, or whatever name you may bear, I wish you to understand that your words have made a desperate man of me, and I warn yonder cringing coward not to speak to me, or I will crush him as a worm beneath my heel."

"Now tell me; where is my wife and child?"

"I know nothing of them."

"Were they not here?"

"A woman, with a child, came here one day, claiming to be your wife, and after a talk with my father she left."

"And whither has she gone?"

"I know nothing of her, as I felt no interest in her."

"No interest in her, Grace? Your own kindred?"

"I feel none in you, sir, and the sooner this painful interview ends by your leaving this house, the better for all of us," was the haughty reply.

The young sailor gazed upon her an instant with a pitying look, rather than one of anger, and then said calmly:

"I will leave this house, for the present, at least; but knowing myself to have been my father's heir, and guiltless of any wrong toward him while he lived, I will see if his will against me holds good before the courts."

"Not that I care for the wealth, for I have a profession, and I have money in plenty; but I will tear from that wretch the fortune I feel he has gained by trickery, fraud, and perhaps by murder."

"Duke Gregory, I—!"

"Hold! Grace, your bullying manner and high tone has no terror for me and I will be heard, when I say you have married a man whom I always told my father was a villain, and whom I now believe to be worse than my wildest fancy painted him."

"Now, sir, you know my opinion of you, and henceforth it shall be war to the bitter end between us."

"Give me now the papers intrusted to your keeping by my poor misguided father, and I will leave you."

"You shall have your inheritance, Lieutenant Gregory, at once."

And the judge hastily turned to his desk.

"My inheritance?"

"Yes, sir, for your late father left in my hands for you a letter of vast importance, to be delivered only into your hands, and with it a roll of bank-notes, sir, amounting to five thousand dollars."

"The money, Judge Townsend, you can keep, with the rest of the property in your possession, at least for the present; but the letter I will take now."

He held forth his hand, and a sealed letter was placed in it by the judge.

Thrusting it into an inner pocket he turned, without a word, but with a look of reproach at his sister, he left the library and the mansion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRONG PATH.

OUT upon the broad piazza, down the stone steps, went the disowned son, and rapidly his steps led him by the carriage drive to the highway.

Unconsciously he turned to the right, upon reaching the road, and had traversed it for a mile, before he seemed to realize that he was going away from, rather than to his vessel.

Remembering that a path through the woodland ahead, would lead him down to the shore he kept on and turned into it, and after following it for the third of a league suddenly came out in an opening.

A cottage was before him, a quiet little home on the hillside, from which a view of the ocean beyond could be obtained.

A rustic fence encircling a garden, a small barn, an acre field and a front yard filled with flowers, the perfume of which reached him upon the breeze, made up the homely picture, and momentarily he halted.

The moonlight silvered the scene with beauty, and the cottage seemed to bring up before him bygone memories, for he sighed heavily.

As he was about to pass on a voice hailed him: "Lieutenant Gregory, is that you?"

He started, and beheld the same woman he had met at the mansion gate.

"Yes, Mammy Bond, it is I."

"I thought you had gone up to the Hall."

"And so did I; but I found no welcome there, and—"

"Boy, in God's name what do you mean?" she cried, eagerly, throwing the little gate open and coming out.

"I mean that my sister gave me no welcome, and that I found another claiming my inheritance."

"Judge Townsend, yes; but he can only claim your sister's share," she exclaimed, with intense earnestness.

"They claim it all, and say I have no home," he said, sadly.

"You have a home, Duke Gregory, for my home shall ever be yours; but I tell you, boy, there has been some devil's work being played up there, and Leroy Townsend and that haughty sister of yours are at the bottom of it."

"No, no, they cannot deprive you of your rights, and you must see that you wrest your fortune from their tenacious grasp; ay, you must have yonder estate, Duke Gregory, though the heavens fall."

He seemed surprised at her earnestness, and said, calmly:

"I shall see what the law will do for me, Mammy Bond; but now, if you will allow me, I will come in for the night, as I care not to return to my vessel, and I have an important letter to read; my father's inheritance, Judge Townsend told me," he added, bitterly.

"Yes, come in, and treble welcome, my poor boy, and you shall have the same pleasant little room where you have before passed many a day and night when you were a little child."

"Yes, come in, and I will get you a light, and kindle a fire on the hearth, for the nights are growing chill; come!"

She led him in upon the little portico and bidding him be seated, went within doors.

But he could not sit down with the wild thoughts throbbing through his brain, and paced to and fro until she returned and ushered him into a pleasant room, where a lamp gave a bright light and a cheerful fire was burning in the large, old-fashioned chimney-place.

"There, now you can be comfortable, and glad am I to have you as my guest and welcome you beneath my roof."

"If you need anything call me, and I will have you a nice breakfast in the morning, for I would kill for you, Duke Gregory, the fatted calf."

She brushed the tears from her eyes as she spoke, and left the room, and the young sailor was alone with his bitter thoughts.

For some moments did Marmaduke Gregory stand in silent meditation in the center of the room; then, with a sigh, he went over to the table, drew up an easy-chair, and sat down to read the momentous letter he had received from the lawyer's hands.

Carefully he took it from his inner pocket and gazed upon it, while unconsciously he shuddered.

"Well, I must not be a coward; but read this, bring it to me what it may," he said firmly, and instantly he broke the seals and opened the letter, which was written in his father's bold, well-known hand.

CHAPTER X.

THE LETTER.

THE first few lines that Marmaduke Gregory read of his father's letter caused his eyes to grow dim, and his hands to tremble so that the pages were all blurred before him.

What he read, and which in a short half-hour turned his kindly heart to stone, the reader shall know in full, and I give the letter as it was written.

"AT HOME,

"CHRISTMAS NIGHT, 18—.

"MY SON MARMADUKE:

"Knowing that my death is not far off, for my physicians tell me I cannot live, I deem it my duty to confess to you a secret of my life and of your own, and it is a sin on my part that weighs me down now as I stand upon the threshold of eternity."

"Twenty-six years ago, when I was a young man about the age you are now, I was running down from Boston to Salem in a coasting schooner, a packet between those two cities."

"Upon that vessel was a young and beautiful girl, with her widowed mother, who was the wife of a sea captain that had been lost at sea."

"I made their acquaintance, and was deeply interested in the maiden from my first sight of her, and a severe storm springing up they looked to me for help in their alarm."

"Well, we were dismayed and the hull went ashore, and we were all washed off amid the breakers; but I clung to this maiden and saved her life, though her mother was lost."

"I carried her to the nearest town, and through days of illness nursed her back to life, and fell more and more in love with her each day, until I was determined to make her my wife."

"Leaving her at the village tavern I went home and sounded my father upon the subject of my marriage; but he was a stern man, had a will of iron, and had selected a wife for me, and threatened, if I did not marry her he would cut me off without a dollar, and I knew well that he would keep his word."

"I returned to Clarice; but upon again meeting her I felt that I could not give her up."

"Her father had owned a little place, which he had loaned money upon that was never paid, and strange to say it was within little less than a league of my own home."

"This was all she had in the world, excepting a mere pittance in money, and here she was determined to go."

"Well, my son, I may as well confess it to you, that I asked her to become my wife, binding her to secrecy regarding it, until I would make it known myself, and one night we went to a little church and a ceremony was gone through with which was a mockery, for, afraid to bind myself legally to her, on account of my father, I had bribed the sexton to put on the ministerial robes of the clergyman and perform the service."

"This he did, and Clarice believed it all right,

"But at last matters became so complicated I had either to confess to my father that I was married, or tell Clarice the fearful truth, for he was slowly dying, and was determined to see me wedded before his death.

"I chose the latter alternative, and told her of her shame.

"She took it more calmly than I had supposed; but it was a part of her acting, as you shall see.

"I was married in my own home, for my father being a paralytic, was unable to go out, and Judge Gerard consented that his daughter, Grace, who was to be my wife, should come to our house under the circumstances.

"Shortly after my father died, and I inherited his vast property, besides receiving a large fortune with my wife.

"A year after our marriage my wife gave birth to twins; a boy and a girl, and her life was sacrificed, for she never saw her children, who were placed in charge of a woman living not far away that I heard had lately lost her baby.

"Business of an important nature calling me away from home immediately after the death of my wife, I was compelled to remain absent for over a year, and upon my return asked to have my children sent for, having engaged competent nurses for them.

"They soon came, and I was rejoiced in finding you a bright healthy boy, and fearful of losing your sister, who had not attained your growth, nor seemed near so bright for her age.

"But you both continued in good health, and I watched you, as you grew up, with the deepest interest.

"But why need I dwell upon the years that passed until you attained the age of youth?

"Suffice it that you went into the Navy with my every wish for your success, while your sister remained at home with me to cheer my lonely hours.

"All this time I had not forgotten poor Clarice whom I had so cruelly wronged.

"Now and then I met her; but ever she passed me by without a word, though she it was, I had afterward learned, to whom my children had been intrusted in their early infancy.

"One day I asked her about the death of our child, for I knew that she had been a mother.

"She halted in the road where I met her, and said earnestly:

"Neil Gregory, I have registered an oath against you, and that our child you shall yet hear of."

"I did not understand her and she would say no more, and I rode on wondering how it was that all her beauty had so rapidly faded, and that in so short a time she had become like an old woman, for her hair had turned gray.

"At last, in the midst of congratulations upon your gallant deeds at sea, I was struck down, as your grandfather had been, with paralysis, and I felt that I would never arise from my bed.

"It was a hard blow, for I loved life, and hated to give up the world and its pleasures; but I felt that ere long I must die, and resigned myself to my fate.

"One day a woman called and asked to see me alone.

"I granted her request and Clarice entered, and her first words were:

"Neil Gregory, I have come to make known to you a secret that will cause you the deepest anguish in your dying hours."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET.

WITH a short pause, as though to gain breath, Marmaduke Gregory continued reading the strange letter written by his dead father.

"In reply," went on the letter, "to the words of Clarice, I said:

"Why have you come to torture me now in my helplessness?"

"Because I hate you, Neil Gregory, and because I have you in my power, was her almost savage answer.

"If you have aught to say to me, say it, and begone," I demanded, and she went on, taking a seat just in front of where I lay:

"I have much to say, Neil Gregory, that will bring pain to you.

"First let me ask you how your children thrive?"

"I answered that my daughter was well, and that your name was on every lip.

"She laughed mockingly at this and went on in her low, but earnest way:

"Neil Gregory, when your wife, I say your wife, gave birth to twins, I was the one who took charge of them, for I had learned that their mother could not live, and made known to the housekeeper that I had just lost an infant.

"I told the housekeeper a lie, for my child had not died; but the lie served my purpose well, and I was content.

"Instead of dying, my child was a splendid baby of six months old.

"Well, I took your children, and you did not see them for a year; in fact you never saw your little boy again, for he died ere he was a month old, and I buried him beneath the elm in my yard, where his tiny remains can now be found, if you care to look for them.

"But I told no one of his death, and quietly put my boy, your boy and mine, Neil Gregory, in his place, and so you received the two back, though you wondered why the male had so far surpassed the female child in growth and strength.

"The truth was that he was six months older than his half-sister.

"Now, Neil Gregory, you have reared my boy of dishonored birth, as your son, the child of your wife Grace, and I have my revenge in knowing that while his little half-brother sleeps beneath the elm, he will be honored among men and inherit your proud name and large fortune.

"Neil Gregory, in a short while you will die; but up to the hour of your death you will have to remember that the boy you love, the one who is to inherit your wealth, is my dishonored son."

"Marmaduke, I could not speak, and only gazed at her, and seeing that her strange confession had done just what she had intended it should do, bring on a second paralytic stroke, she turned and glided from the room.

"She believed I would die then, and knew that my will was made in your favor, as was the custom of our name, excepting the marriage portion that was to be given to your half-sister Grace.

"But life was yet strong within me and I did not die, but again rallied, and death may yet be some weeks off, for I have strength to write you this long confession.

"And more, I have strength to re-write my will and thwart that woman's revenge on me, though it falls hard on you, my poor son, for such you are, though I cannot give you my name.

"Yes, I cut you off with five thousand dollars in cash, and this secret, this confession, and in so doing I revenge myself on the woman whom I believe murdered my own son to put you in his place.

"To your half-sister, Grace, I leave my entire fortune, including this house, and also make known to her the secret I now disclose to you.

"And more, as Judge Leroy Townsend executes my will, he too knows the fateful secret; though he knew before of the wrong I did that woman Clarice, as the sexton, before dying, confessed his part in it to him.

"To further humble that woman, although it falls heavily upon you, one month after you receive this confession, Judge Townsend is authorized to make known to the world what I here write you.

"As for the poor thing you married, and who came with her young child to me just after the visit of that woman, telling me that you had sent her, and that the reverses her father had met with had driven him to suicide, she arrived at an inopportune moment, for I felt revengeful too, and told her all regarding you.

"It nearly killed her, and she fled from my home with her child, as from a pest-house, and I doubt if you ever see her again.

"Now, my dishonored son, as you can no longer raise your proud head among honorable men, no longer remain in a service where your brother officers will point the finger of scorn upon you, I advise that you cease hunting down pirates and cast your lot with them.

"This is the last advice I give you, and I die content in having, through humbling you, revenged myself upon that woman.

"On the brink of the grave I sign myself,

"Your father, NEIL GREGORY."

With the last word a groan broke from the lips of Marmaduke Gregory that seemed to rend his very heart, and clutching wildly at the air he tottered to his feet and fell his full length heavily upon the floor, shaking the little cottage to its foundations.

CHAPTER XII.

CLARICE.

THE heavy fall of Marmaduke Gregory aroused Mrs. Bond from a deep reverie in which she had fallen, after seeking her own room.

She was gazing straight into the burning embers, seemingly reading there some sad story, when, with a bound, she was upon her feet, as the cottage shook under the fall of the young officer.

Rushing across the hall she knocked loudly at the door, and no answer coming, she opened it and beheld the prostrate form.

"Great God! can he be dead?" she cried, in a tone of horror.

Instantly she was upon her knees bending over him, her hand upon his heart.

"No, no, he lives, for his heart beats; ha! this has caused him to swoon away, for it is in the writing of Neil Gregory."

She seized the letter, glanced at it an instant, and thrusting it into her bosom, set about means for the restoration of the young man.

With a strength one would not believe her capable of, she raised his form, placing it upon a lounge and unfastened his coat and vest, after which she applied restoratives she brought from her own room.

It was a long, long time before he showed the slightest sign of returning consciousness; but at last he began to breathe heavily, and rallying suddenly, opened his eyes and sat up.

One strange, quick glance around him, and his eyes fell upon the woman's face.

Instantly he started, shuddered, and said calmly:

"I felt myself falling, and know no more."

"Yes, you received a shock that unnerved you; but you are better now."

"Lie down, and you will be all right once more."

Instantly he was upon his feet, and he said impatiently:

"No, no, I cannot lie down; for me there is no more rest; but the letter, where is it?"

"I have it here," and she handed it to him with a trembling hand.

"Do you know its contents?" he eagerly asked.

"I can guess," she said.

"Read it, please."

His manner was strangely calm, almost tender, and she unfolded the sheets and read them through, he attentively watching her the while.

When she had finished she raised her eyes to his.

They were dim with tears, while her mouth wore an expression of almost savage fierceness.

"Has Neil Gregory written the truth there?" he asked, earnestly.

"He has."

"In every word?"

"Yes."

"You are Clarice Bond?"

"I am."

"My poor, poor mother; you too have suffered."

He drew her toward him, and sobbing with bitterness and joy commingled, she pillowed her head upon his broad breast.

"Suffered? oh! how much my own poor heart only knows.

"When that man, whom I had so devotedly loved, so cruelly deceived me, and deserted me, I swore to be avenged, my son.

"But I believed that in giving to you that which he would deprive you of, I would have ample revenge, and I was cruel enough to hope when he lay paralyzed before me, that what I told him would kill him, and the secret remain buried in the grave.

"But alas! he rallied, and in the end he thwarted me, and upon you, my brave, noble boy, has fallen the curse through my act."

"Ay, curse it is, for I am dishonored before the world, and within the month all will know just who and what I am, as you see his letter says Judge Townsend will make it known."

"But will Judge Townsend do so?" she eagerly asked.

"Will a viper sting when trod on?" was the bitter response, and then he continued:

"I had him by the throat last night, and he will not forget it; yes, he will surely bring dishonor upon me, for it lies within his power."

She was silent a moment, and then her eyes roamed to the tall old clock in the corner.

"Twelve o'clock," she said aloud.

"Yes."

"Well, rest here to-night, and try to compose yourself to sleep, my poor boy."

"And you?"

"I have some work to do; but the vessel at anchor in the inlet is yours?"

"Yes."

"Well, remain with me until I have thought over what is best; perhaps after all the judge may keep the dread secret from the world."

"Never! not that man; but even should he, it will be in my heart and brain and drive me wild."

She made no reply, but going out for an instant returned with a glass.

"Here, drink this and it will soothe you," she said softly.

He seized it from her hand and eagerly drank it down at a swallow.

"Now lie down and rest until I come back."

"Whither would you go—mother?"

"God bless you for that name from your lips, my son; I have work to do just now. Lie down, please, and await my return."

Mechanically he obeyed, and his eyes closed wearily as she left the room.

"The drug will control him for a short time; now to carry out my half-formed plan, for I will carry it out, come what may."

She went to a desk and took out a purse heavy with gold and placed it in her pocket; then she took from a chest a glass jar, and out of this took something that appeared like the root of a tree.

Thrusting this into the bosom of her dress, she threw her shawl around her and hurried from the cabin.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SMUGGLER.

Down the hillside went Clarice Bond, the poor, wronged woman, for half a mile, and then, under the cliff and half-hidden in a rocky glen she came upon a rude cabin.

A light was burning in it, and she knocked at the door.

There was a stir within, and a woman's voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"Mrs. Bond; I wish to see Carl."

Instantly the door opened, and a young woman was visible.

It was a neatly furnished cabin of two rooms, with more comforts visible than would be expected in a place so humble, and the woman had an air of refinement above the class of fishermen's wives.

"Well, Nannie, I have made a late call, but I wish to see Carl on a little business," said Mrs. Bond.

"Come out, Carl; it is Mrs. Bond," called out the young woman, and a partition was shoved aside from the back of the cavern, the act disclosing a cavernous entrance, in which stood a young man in sailor garb.

He had a frank, resolute face, yet a little reckless, and placed in his belt a pistol he had drawn when the knock came on the door.

"I have to be cautious, Mrs. Bond, since I have been suspected, you know, of being a smuggler," he said pleasantly.

"I do not wonder at your caution, Carl; but come, if Mrs. Carter will excuse you, I wish you to aid me, as I have a sick gentleman at my house."

"Of course I will excuse him for you, Mrs. Bond," said the young wife.

"Yes, we will do anything for you," responded the young sailor.

"You are very good; but how is my little pet?"

"In the cradle and never better," said the mother.

Clarice Bond walked over and peeped at the little infant, and then, with a good-by to Mrs. Carter left the cabin, followed by the young sailor.

For some distance she trudged up the hill in silence, and then halting, said abruptly, while she gazed straight into the face of her companion:

"Carl Carter, you once said that you would serve me well if I asked it."

"And I meant it, for did you not save me from prison by swearing an alibi for me when you knew I was guilty of smuggling, and more, did you not nurse my wife day and night through long weeks of illness? Oh, yes, you have but to say the word and I will do what you ask."

"Suppose it were a life in the way?"

The man started, but answered, promptly:

"I like not blood-letting, for I hate bad memories; but I have been forced to kill in self-defense, and if it was to serve you I would do it again."

"I know it, Carl, as I know well that you are the secret leader of the smuggler band on this coast; but I swore to the contrary, for your young wife's sake."

"But I do not ask you to take life, only to do something for me that will require all your boldness and tact."

"I am ready, Mrs. Bond," was the quick response.

"You know Judge Townsend?"

"Well."

"And the Hall?"

"Perfectly, for I worked there, when a small boy, with my father."

"I wish you to go there and ask him to visit the village with you, to draw up papers for a dying man."

"But, will he do it?"

"His god is gold, and here it is for you to offer to pay him in advance."

"Well?"

"At some point of the road have one of your men, whom you can trust, thoroughly, to halt you both, and then you lay hold of the judge and bind him."

"I am listening."

"Carry him to your secret rendezvous, and keep him there until you hear from me."

"I will do so; but he knows me, and would not go with me, so I will send Maddocks for him, and I will waylay them on the road."

"It is just as well; it is not yet one o'clock, and you can get there by two, at furthest."

"I will go at once."

"And I will pay you and Maddocks well."

"Not me; but you may give Maddocks a few gold pieces."

"Very well; now be off, and I may call for your prisoner before daylight; if not, to-morrow night, certainly."

"He will be ready for you when wanted, Mrs. Bond."

So saying, the young smuggler turned away, and Clarice Bond, after watching his departing form for a moment, kept on up the hillside into the highway, and reaching the gate leading into the grounds of the Gregory mansion, entered, and crept to a hiding-place in the shrubbery near the house.

A large dog came bounding out from under the piazza, and rushed up to her; but a low word caused him to stop short and become friendly with her, he evidently knowing her well.

Taking him by the collar she led him away further into the grounds, and sought shelter in a rustic arbor, where she sat down to wait, still holding the dog firmly.

Watching, she soon after saw a vehicle drive up the gravel way and halt at the door.

A man dismounted and sounded the heavy knocker, and after a short delay the door was opened.

There was a parley for a few moments, and she could not hear the words, while she watched the dog and kept him still; then two forms got into the vehicle, which at once rolled away from the mansion.

"He has bitten at the golden bait, and has gone; that man would sell his soul for gold."

"Now I am ready to do my work, as soon as all is still once more," and there was a strange, threatening ring in her tone, as if she had determined upon some desperate deed.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LIFE TO SAVE HONOR.

FOR nearly half an hour after the vehicle rolled away from the Hall, Clarice Bond sat in silence.

She had released her grasp upon the dog, and he had gone off somewhere, evidently fearing no harm from her to the inmates of the mansion, or the disappearance of the family plate at her hands.

At last she arose and drawing a long breath, as though to nerve her for her work, she crept from tree to tree to the mansion, and at last reached the piazza.

As noiseless as a cat in her movements, she ascended to the door and after waiting an instant, as if wholly familiar with the mansion's secrets, she touched a spring, made in the form

of some ornamental work, and the panel over the door knob flew open.

Reaching her hand within she gently unlocked the door, drew back the bolt, and softly entered.

Closing the door and the panel behind her she moved across the hall toward the broad stairway, her way dimly lighted by the moonlight streaming in through the glass over the front door.

Softly up the stairs she crept, and gaining the second floor went to a door on the right.

It was closed, but she softly turned the knob, and it opened.

"Thank God it was not locked," she muttered.

There was a taper burning in the fire-place, and its light revealed that it was a large, luxuriously furnished bedroom.

But the bed was empty, though evidently it had been slept in.

Across the room was a door that was partly closed, and to this the woman made her way.

She gave it a gentle shove, and it creaked, and instantly she was still as a statue.

But the noise had evidently disturbed no one, and another push opened it far enough for the woman to pass through; but the creaking sound caused a movement of some kind in the other room.

Instantly she stood back in the shadows, and her arm was withdrawn from her bosom and held a knife.

But no other sound was heard and the woman passed through a narrow dressing-room, for such it seemed to be, and another door ajar was before her.

"This is her room," she muttered.

Quietly she thrust her head within and gazed around her.

There was no taper burning in the room, but the moonlight came through the open windows and distinctly showed that it was a bed-chamber, and that the bed held an occupant.

A moment the woman gazed at the one in the bed and then slowly retreated to the first room.

Taking from her bosom the root she had brought from home with her, she held it over the taper until one end was lighted, burning like a coal, without a blaze.

Putting her kerchief to her nose, to avoid inhaling the odor, for the burning root emitted a peculiar, pleasant perfume, she returned to the second chamber and cautiously entered.

Placing the burning root upon a fancy bracket of bronze, where it would ignite nothing and cause fire, she stepped toward the bed and gazed an instant at the sleeper, still holding her handkerchief to her face.

It was Grace, the wife of Judge Townsend, and haughty half-sister of Duke, the disowned son.

She was sleeping soundly, and, as the fumes of the burning wood reached her nostrils, she began to breathe heavily.

An instant only did Clarice Bond stand there, and then she turned softly and glided out of the room.

Crossing the front chamber, which Judge Townsend's love of gold had caused him to vacate a half an hour before, she regained the hall, descended the stairs quietly, opened the door, closed it, and with her hand through the secret panel relocked it.

As she stepped out into the moonlight the dog rejoined her.

"Ah, Lion, you would not greet me thus if you knew what I had done."

"And if you had the power of speech, you could tell on me," she said, grimly, as she trudged on her way down the gravel drive leading to the gate.

Walking briskly, she soon reached her home, and softly entered the room where she had left her son sleeping.

But the effects of the opiate his strong constitution and suffering had already thrown off, and he was pacing the room, his head bent, and hands clasped behind him.

"Well, mother! I thought you had retired," he said, sadly.

"It is well, my son, for the stain upon your birth and name need never be known now," she said, fiercely.

"Good God! what do you mean?" he gasped, struck by her white face and strange manner.

"Sit down, and you shall hear all, and then you must act, as I have done," she answered, calmly; and then she added:

"To save your honor, Duke Gregory, lives must be taken, and foes be removed from your path."

CHAPTER XV.

A WOMAN'S PLOT.

"MOTHER, in Heaven's name what have you done?" cried Duke Gregory, as he sunk down on the lounge, and she drew a chair up in front of him, and seated herself.

"I have done that, Duke, my son, which will save you from the dishonor that wretch Neil Gregory tried to heap upon you through hatred of me."

"And what have you done?"

"I have saved you."

"How?"

"Do you think that I, your mother, who

ended one life that you might reap your just reward—"

"Mother! woman! do I understand you aright?" he cried, in a tone of horror, starting to his feet.

"Yes, I poisoned the boy twin of Neil Gregory, and put you in his place," was the unflinching reply.

"God in heaven have mercy upon you," groaned the stricken son.

"I need no mercy, Duke Gregory, and I care for no pity; that man, your father, turned me from a pure woman into a fiend, thirsting for revenge."

"I bided my time, and the moment came when I had it, for his child died by my hand, and you, I believed, hoped, would be the one to have the rights he denied you."

"In his last hour he was determined to be revenged on me, and he told Leroy Townsend and his daughter Grace, all that I had made known to him, and more, he wrote you a letter telling you of your dishonor, and has left a demand that it shall be given to the public."

"Shall he lie in his grave, think you, Duke Gregory, and rest there, leaving such a damnable work to be done?"

"Oh, no! not while I live to thwart it."

"Again I ask, what have you done?" and the man could hardly speak.

"I first plotted to get Leroy Townsend into your power."

"My power?"

"Yes."

"What mean you?"

"Your ship lies at anchor in the basin?"

"Yes."

"You are her commander?"

"Yes."

"There are none to dispute your word on board?"

"No."

"Pirates are hung at the yard-arm when taken?"

"Yes."

"Without trial?"

"Frequently."

"Well, there are known to be smugglers and pirates on this coast, and if you capture one and carry him on your vessel you have a right to hang him?"

"But who is this pirate?"

"Judge Leroy Townsend."

The young officer started, but said in a low tone:

"I do not get your meaning."

"I know a smuggler dwelling on this coast, whom, two hours ago, I sent to the Hall under pretense of being a messenger to get Judge Townsend to visit the village, two leagues away, to draw up a will for a dying stranger at the tavern."

"Oh, mother! mother!"

Unheeding his cry, she went on:

"My plan worked well, for I gave my man gold to offer the judge in advance, and it is his idol, and he was taken in a vehicle along the highway, seized suddenly, and is now in a secret retreat awaiting you to go on board your vessel, carry him with you, and when at sea to hang him at the yard-arm."

"His death buries this secret of your birth, and you, as the heir, will save your honor and inherit your estates after all, for I know where the will is kept, for it was not to be registered until your return, and still remains in the keeping of Leroy Townsend."

"Oh, temptress!" cried Duke Gregory, springing to his feet, and rapidly pacing to and fro, his face livid, his lips set, and his whole form quivering with emotion.

"Self-preservation is Nature's first law, Duke Gregory," she said, in a firm tone.

"True; but I cannot do it."

"Then disgrace falls upon you in the eyes of your fellow-men."

"I know it, I knew it, alas!"

"Not one act of yours has caused this fearful punishment to fall upon you; but one act of yours can save you."

"But, my poor mother, my sister Grace knows this fearful secret, and she is even more bitter against me than Judge Townsend."

"Your sister Grace will never appear against you unless before the throne of God," said the woman, impressively.

The man started and turned toward her, and his eyes asked the question of what she meant.

"I mean, Duke, that she is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"And when did she die?"

"To-night."

"By your hand?" and he trembled with horror.

"By my hand, for I caused her to sink peacefully into a rapturous sleep, which ended in death."

"I will tell you, my son: my father, in one of his voyages to India, brought home some drugs, poisons and barks, the uses of which he learned from a native medicine-man."

"These were among his effects, and he had explained their use to me."

"One of these was a root which, when lighted at one end, emits an odor that is delicious to the

senses, and causes one to sink into deep slumber with delightful dreams.

"Administered for a few moments by inhalation it is delicious; but for a longer time it is sure death."

"I went to the Hall to-night, and carried with me this deadly herb."

"I knew a secret way to enter the mansion, told me by Neil Gregory long ago, and I gained entrance and sought Grace Townsend's room."

"She was asleep, and I lighted this root and left it there to send forth its poisonous odor, and long ere this she is dead, and none will know how she died, for it will burn to ashes that a breath will blow away."

"But Leroy Townsend being absent it will be believed that he killed her and fled, and I will then secure the last will of your father, and you, my son, need have no fear."

He listened to her fearful story without a word in reply, and with a look of horror upon his face.

Seeing that he remained silent she went on:

"Duke Gregory, there was a time when you loved your father; but he forfeited that love, and you have now but cause to hate and curse him."

"You also loved your sister, haughty and cold though she ever was; but she cast you off and became the wife of a man's whose damnable trickery made Neil Gregory do as he has done by you; for had it not been for Leroy Townsend, he would have sought revenge on me, and kept your secret."

"But Leroy Townsend urged him on, and made him do as he did, and also forced your sister, for she obeyed her father, to marry him, and thus he gained possession of your fortune and hers."

"Now this man is in your power, and your sister is dead, and I say unto you hang him at the yard arm, and all will be well, for no one knows of your visit here."

"Yes, there are two; Burton, the butler, and one other."

"They shall be silenced."

"No, no; you are too ready to—"

"Bah! I'll not harm them, but simply bribe them to say nothing of your arrival on the coast, and by the sunrise you can have gained an offing, and ere noon drop the land from sight."

"No, no, I cannot."

"After all I have done for you, Duke Gregory, will you now refuse to merely take the life of a man you know to be a robber and your worst foe?"

"I dare not."

"You have a wife and child, I believe?"

He started and cried:

"Oh God, yes!"

"Then keep the dishonor from them."

"But Neil Gregory says he told—"

"Bah! you can tell her it was but the sayings of an old paralytic in his dotage, and she will believe you."

"Heed me, Duke Gregory, my noble boy, and let not this dishonor rest upon you, and upon your wife and child, and drag you down in shame and misery, when one act of yours can save you."

"Woman! temptress, I yield to your temptations."

"Yes, he shall die, and with him perish the base secret, and I will yet retain honor in the eyes of my fellow-men, and save my wife and child from shame and misery."

He fairly shrieked forth the words, and she burst into a loud peal of demoniacal laughter, in her wild joy at having conquered.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PRISONER.

"COME, my son, come, for you have no time to lose, would you get on board the schooner under shadow of the darkness; it is now after three."

The woman having conquered was determined to give no time for repentance, and urged her son from the cottage, and down the path leading to the smugglers' cabin, she leading the way at a brisk pace, and he silently following.

"Await here—oh! there is the man I seek now," she cried, as she beheld the form of a man approaching the cabin.

"Carl!" she cried in a clear tone.

He started, but catching sight of her advanced to meet her.

"Did you capture him?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, Mrs. Bond."

"He was amazed doubtless."

"He was alarmed greatly."

"And Maddocks?"

"Was with me, and has him in charge now at the retreat."

"You have done well; but you must do more for me."

"I am ready."

"Go back to the retreat, and gag and bind Judge Townsend thoroughly; then take him in your boat and row him down to yonder rock, where I will await you."

"And Maddocks?"

"Leave him behind."

"I will do so at once."

"That is right; for you must get alongside yonder schooner before daylight with the prisoner."

"I will do my best," and the young sailor hastened away, while Clarice Bond returned to her son who had not moved from where she had left him.

"Cheer up, Duke, my brave boy, for the past and its horrors will soon be behind you, and the future will be ever so bright."

"Not for me, my poor, misguided mother."

"Yes, for you; for as mine was the first sin, from ignorance of doing wrong, mine are the sins now that right those wrongs."

"I tell you, Duke, Neil Gregory would turn over in his coffin if he knew after all I had outwitted him."

"But at such a price."

"Any price is better than your dishonor, Duke Gregory."

"One day I may think so; but the dishonor was no fault of mine."

"Bah! don't moralize, but act; in a few moments your prisoner will be here in a boat, and I will go with Carl to the schooner, and return with him, and you have your destiny in your own hands, and the life of that wretch must be the forfeit."

"You have promised me that it shall."

"Yes, mother, I have promised."

"And will keep that pledge?"

"Yes."

"Enough: I ask no more; where will you touch next?"

"At Baltimore."

"Then I will write you there the result of his disappearance and the death of Grace."

The man shuddered and made no reply, but paced to and fro upon the sands, with his restless, nervous tread.

"It is brightening in the east; Carl stays long," said the woman impatiently.

But as she spoke the quick ears of the sailor caught the dip of oars, and soon after a boat came in sight and landed near them.

"Get on board, sir, please," she said to her son, and she instantly followed him, as he took a seat in the stern sheets and grasped the tiller.

"Which way, sir?" asked Carl, touching his hat politely.

"Yonder schooner is my destination," was the low reply.

The oarsman set to work with strong pulls and sent the boat over the waters, rippled by a six-knot breeze blowing from off-shore.

On the seat fronting Duke Gregory sat the lawyer, Leroy Townsend, and his head dropped upon his breast in despair when he saw who it was that had entered the boat.

But his hands were bound behind him, and a bandage had been fastened tight across his mouth so that he could not speak.

But he could see, and his eyes nearly started from their sockets, as Clarice Bond came aft and took a seat by his side, while she said in a low tone:

"Leroy Townsend, better had it been for you, had you allowed Neil Gregory to wreak his vengeance upon me, and not urged him to make public the dishonor on that boy."

"But I have played my cards well, and I won the game of revenge after all, for Duke Gregory will get the fortune you sought to cheat him out of, as his half-sister, the haughty Grace, your wife, died to-night."

A groan burst from the man and he writhed in agony, seeing which, Duke Gregory said sternly:

"Cease torturing him."

She obeyed, and a moment after the boat was hailed from the Arrow.

Her commander answered the hail, and ran his boat alongside, and then said sternly, addressing the officer of the deck:

"Mr. Harold, here is a prisoner: send him below and have him put in irons, and allow no one to speak a word with him, under penalty of the cat."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the young officer, and calling two seamen he ordered the prisoner, who could hardly stand from fright, to be carried below.

"Now, sir, get the anchor up at once, and set sail," was the next order, and at the command of the officer the men sprang to their work, while Duke Gregory turned to Clarice Bond and said in a low tone:

"Farewell; we shall meet again."

"Yes, and under brighter skies," was the answer as she held forth her hand. He grasped it an instant, and then drawing from his pocket a purse of gold, tossed it in on the boat, and said aloud:

"There, my lad, is a souvenir for you; good-night."

Carl would have refused the money, but Clarice bade him keep it, and as the darkness was fading away before the approach of day, he pulled rapidly shoreward, while the schooner a few moments after, with her huge fore and main sails set, went flying away seaward, wing-and-wing before the wind, a man forward in irons utterly wretched, and her commander in her cabin equally so, for he could not banish the haunting phantoms from before his gaze.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETRIBUTION.

ON board the Arrow was considerable wondering, at the unexpected return of the commander, for the officers and crew were aware that the vessel was anchored off Duke Gregory's house, and had not expected him back for a day or two; in fact he had hinted at having a dinner on board while the schooner was there, and also of inviting all up to the Hall.

There was more wondering at the mysterious prisoner brought on board, and yet there was no opportunity of finding out who or what he was, for the threatened punishment with the cat-o'-nine tails, checked the curiosity even of the most curious.

The manner of their commander was constrained and stern, and altogether neither officers nor crew enjoyed the sudden sailing under such mysterious circumstances.

As the dawn broke, and the schooner was driving along merrily under a constantly freshening breeze, Duke Gregory left the cabin and went on deck.

His first officer, Arthur Nevil was pacing the deck, with quarter-deck tread, watching the rapidly receding shores, and glancing at his commander fairly started at the change he saw in him.

His eyes were sunken and held in them a strange brightness, while his face was haggard, and lines of suffering were about the mouth.

In fact, Duke Gregory's night of horror had added years to his life, and caused him to look as though he had been seriously ill.

"I do hope, sir, that you have had no sad tidings nor met with misfortune at home?" queried the young officer, kindly.

"Yes, Nevil, I have, for I found that my father had lately died, and other sorrows have come upon me," was the abrupt answer.

"You have my deepest sympathy, sir," responded the officer, and having learned this much, he made another attempt:

"I left the prisoner gagged, sir; is it your wish that he remain so?"

"No, I will see to it though."

Duke Gregory walked forward and descended to the place where the prisoner was confined.

He found him pacing to and fro, the bandage still across his mouth, and his hands ironed behind him.

Near him a marine stood musket in hand.

"Guard, you can retire for the present. I will recall you when I need you," said the young commander, and the marine, with a salute departed, leaving the prisoner and his captor alone together.

The first act of Duke Gregory was to remove the bandage from across his mouth, then he sat down upon a bench, and said:

"Judge Townsend, I have been struggling hard with my conscience what I should do, and I have decided."

"What right, sir, have you to inflict upon me this outrage?" sternly asked the prisoner, speaking with evident effort after being so long gagged.

"I have the right of power, sir; last night I visited my home and I found you in possession, the husband of my sister—"

"One word, is she dead?" was the eager query.

"To the best of my knowledge, yes."

"Heaven have mercy upon me!" groaned the wretched man, bowing his head, for he had loved Grace as much as one of his sordid nature could love any one.

"I found you," continued Duke, in the same quiet tone, "the husband of my sister, who I know never loved you, and who only obeyed the wish of her father in so doing, and which you urged him to force upon her."

"By the letter you gave me from Neil Gregory, for I will not call him father, I found out who and what I am, and also that you are empowered to make this dread secret known within a month after my knowledge of it."

"This you also wished done, that in case I should sue for my property, I could be forever unentitled to it through my birth."

"The letter I have read and know all its damning tidings, and I gave myself up as utterly lost, until I was tempted to save myself at the expense of others, and that I now do."

"Good God! how?" broke from the livid lips of the man.

"My sister being dead, her tongue can give no utterance to the story."

"But your wife knows of it," cried the lawyer, catching at a straw of hope.

"She will believe my story rather than all others, and appearances will be in my favor."

"And you intend to hold me prisoner until I pledge my word not to reveal the truth?" hesitatingly asked Leroy Townsend.

"I intend to place you beyond giving utterance to it, sir."

"Oh, God! would you take my life?"

"I certainly will."

"For God's sake spare me!"

"I have not an atom of mercy now in my heart."

"But you will have?"

"No."

"Mercy!"

"I know not the word."

"I will pledge myself to keep the secret."
 "I will not trust you."
 "I will swear it by the most sacred oaths."
 "Your oaths are worthless to me."
 "No, no, do not say that, for I am oh! so afraid to die."
 "And I am afraid for you to live."
 "I will be your slave, Duke Gregory."
 "No, you must die, for I tell you, Leroy Townsend, that I am a changed man in the past twenty-four hours."

The prisoner drooped his head again, and then after a moment of silence, in which the young sailor gazed with a stony look down upon him, he said suddenly:

"By Heaven! I will proclaim to your crew what you are, and that you kill me to save yourself from ignominy and ruin."

"By the Heaven above, Leroy Townsend, you have given me fair warning, and I swear to you your tongue shall utter no such words," and the eyes of Duke Gregory fairly blazed with fury, while the ironed prisoner shrunk away from him.

But, with the bound of a tiger the young officer was upon him, and his clutch of steel was upon his throat, while he seized the bandage that had been taken from his mouth, and was about to force the gag in between the shut teeth, when, by a giant effort of strength the lawyer released his throat from the gripe upon it, and shouted in ringing tones:

"Help! for the love of God! help!"

Hurrying feet were at once heard, for the wild cry rung through the vessel, and was heard on deck; but once more seizing the throat of his victim in his iron grasp, Duke Gregory turned toward the coming seamen, and shouted in scintillant tones:

"Back! I did not call, and what right have you to obey the cries of this whining wretch."

The seamen fell back in dismay, at the anger of their commander, and he, exerting his great strength, forced open the shut teeth, and thrust into the mouth the gag.

Then the bandage was quickly adjusted, and prostrated by his struggle and fear combined, the wretched man sunk down upon the deck, the very picture of woe.

"Now, Leroy Townsend, know that you have but one hour to live, for, as soon as we drop the land from sight I swing you up to the yard-arm."

A deep groan was the reply, and Duke Gregory left the steerage, and calling to the waiting guard, said sternly:

"Now guard your prisoner, sir, and mind you, no words with him."

Passing aft, his eyes flashing fire, and the men avoiding his gaze, for they had never before seen him in such a fury, Duke Gregory said:

"Mr. Nevil, I brought on board with me this morning, sir, a noted coast pirate, whom I accidentally got possession of, and it is my intention to hang him within the hour to the yard-arm."

"He deserves it, sir, as a pirate."

"So I have decided, Mr. Nevil, so call the men to witness execution, and rig a rope to the yard-arm at once."

"When ready call me."

Without another word, he went below, while Arthur Nevil muttered:

"Grief at his father's death, and over his other sorrows, seems to have turned the lieutenant's head, and heart too, for he seems to relish hanging that poor devil, while ever before he was merciful even to the worst of outlaws; but he is in no humor to trifle with, and his orders shall be promptly obeyed."

So saying the young officer sung out to the boatswain to call all hands to witness execution, and ordered the rope for hanging a pirate rigged.

This let the crew into the secret as to who it was to be hanged, but why he should have cried so loudly for help, when their commander was talking to them, they could not understand.

"All ready, sir," called out Arthur Nevil down the companionway, and instantly Duke Gregory came on deck, white, stern, and fierce-eyed.

He glanced quickly landward, and saw that the turret of his boyhood's home was just visible above the horizon, and then around upon the sea.

No vessel was in sight, and he said sternly, addressing a midshipman:

"Bring the prisoner aft, sir."

"In irons, sir?"

"Yes, and gagged as he is," was the response.

The middy went forward and in a few moments returned with the prisoner, two marines having to hold him up, for his knees seemed hardly able to support his weight.

They led him aft to where their commander stood, and the eyes of the two men met, one stern and merciless, the other pitifully pleading.

"Leroy, for your crimes," said Duke Gregory, purposely leaving off the prisoner's last name, "I have decided that you die, and I now order you hanged to the yard-arm of this vessel, and may God have mercy upon your guilty soul."

A groan from the prisoner was the only answer, and he gazed with wild eyes upon the assembled crew, in vain striving to give utterance to a cry or word, while the veins stood out upon his forehead like cords.

"Up with him!" came the ringing command, and rapidly the noose was thrown around his neck and the knot adjusted, and up in the air the seamen detailed for the duty, hoisted the writhing victim, from whose lips no cry could come, but in whose eyes dwelt a look that haunted those who saw it to their dying day.

A short while he swung there, swaying to and fro with the motion of the vessel, and then came the order:

"Cut him down!"

It was obeyed, and the body fell with a plunge into the sea and disappeared from sight.

"Now my secret is safe; but alas! my soul is black with guilt," cried Duke Gregory, as he turned away from the sickening scene and hastily went into his cabin, while Arthur Nevil muttered:

"There is some strange mystery in all this."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN IRONS.

Two months have passed away, since the scene enacted on the deck of the American schooner of war Arrow, off the Massachusetts coast, and the time of the vessel's cruise had ended, and her prow was turned homeward.

Up the blue waters of the Chesapeake she sailed swiftly, and dropped anchor under the guns of Fort McHenry, in the beautiful harbor of Baltimore.

Ordering a boat lowered away, Duke Gregory went into the cabin to prepare for his visit ashore, and to report his arrival to the Government, and the successful voyage he had made, for even after his leaving the coast of Massachusetts success did not desert him, and he had broken up a smuggler band on the shores of Maine, and sent in as a prize a large pirate schooner captured off Montauk Point.

The haggard look of the young commander had passed away, and the wild glitter of his eyes, which his officers and crew had so noted after the hanging of Leroy Townsend; but in their place had settled a look of inexpressible sadness.

The past came to him in his quiet hours as a hideous nightmare; but the breaking up of his boyish loves and hopes, the uncertainty of the fate of his beautiful wife and child, were ever with him, leaving their sad impress upon his countenance.

The old kindly way to his crew had returned to him once more; but they could not but see he had had the iron of grief enter deep into his soul.

Suddenly, as he was about dressed in his full uniform, the officer of the deck announced a Government boat alongside, and a moment after a captain of the navy entered his cabin.

"Captain Duke Gregory, I believe," said the officer politely.

"Lieutenant Marmaduke Gregory is my name, sir; how can I serve you?" was the response.

"You were commissioned captain, sir, some three months since, for gallant conduct at sea, and it therefore pains me the more, Captain Gregory, to tell you that I have boarded your vessel upon a most serious matter."

"Indeed, sir, and, after knowing whom I have the honor of addressing, may I know the nature of this serious matter?"

Duke Gregory spoke with the utmost calmness, though somehow his heart sunk within him, and his face became a shade paler.

"I am Captain Lee Manning, sir, and I have orders to arrest you under a most serious charge and carry you on board my vessel in irons."

"In fact, my vessel was ordered to go in search of you this very night."

"Do I understand you aright, sir, for this is no matter to jest upon?" said Duke Gregory hotly.

"I am sorry, sir, to say that you do understand me aright, sir."

"Upon what charge, sir, is this arrest made?"

"A most serious one indeed; that of committing one murder, and committing another."

"Hail who dares accuse me?"

"I make no accusation, sir; I have orders from my Government to make the arrest, and so peremptory are those commands, that, if you answer one question I give you in the affirmative, I will be compelled to put you in irons."

"And that question, captain Manning?"

"Have you executed a man on board your vessel within the past few months?"

"I have, sir."

"By hanging?"

"Yes."

"A person you brought aboard in a shore boat?"

"Yes."

"Enough, sir; my duty is plain, though most painful, for I have greatly admired your gallant career."

"Captain Gregory, you are my prisoner, sir."

Duke Gregory did not move; his face was as

white as though the breath had left his body, and it wore a look that was pitiful in its sorrow.

"Ho on deck there!" called out Captain Manning.

Instantly there was heard the steady tramp of marching men, and a Sergeant of Marines and four men came into the cabin.

"There is the prisoner, sergeant," said Captain Manning.

The sergeant saluted politely, and stepping forward held forth his hands with iron manacles in them.

Mechanically Duke Gregory bared his wrists, and the irons were locked upon them, and he said calmly:

"I am ready, Captain Manning."

Out of his cabin he walked a prisoner in irons, and accused of what he really did not know.

Into the boat alongside he was aided, and his crew gazing in silent commiseration upon him, he was rowed away toward a large sloop-of-war at anchor further up in the harbor.

A row of a few minutes, and he went up the side of the sloop-of-war, gazed on by many with curiosity, and by few with pity, for strange stories had gone abroad concerning him during the two months which had passed since he dropped the bold coast of Massachusetts beneath the horizon.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRANGE SAILOR.

SHORTLY after dark of the day of Duke Gregory's arrest Arthur Nevil was pacing the quarter-deck lost in deep reverie, from which he was startled by the watch hailing an approaching boat.

The answer was:

"A boat from the Dolphin."

The Dolphin was the sloop-of-war to which Duke Gregory had been carried in irons, and the boat was permitted to come alongside the schooner.

There were but two oarsmen and a coxswain in it, and the latter ascended to the deck and asked to see the commanding officer.

"I am in command, coxswain; what is it?" said Arthur Nevil.

"Captain Gregory has sent for his clothes, sir, and asks you please to send what you think he may need."

"Certainly; come into the cabin while the steward gets them ready for you."

The coxswain obeyed, seemingly wondering at this honor done him, but soon realizing why it was conferred.

As he stood in the light of the cabin lamp he seemed slightly ill at ease, as if nervous at being so highly honored.

He was a slender man, slightly under the medium in size, and had gray hair and a dark face that bore traces of suffering.

He was dressed in the checked pants and blue shirt of a man-of-war's man, and held his tarpaulin in his hand.

"Well, my man, as we are just in, and you have been lying in port, perhaps you can tell us what this strange arrest of our captain means?" asked Arthur Nevil, in an off-hand way.

"There are some severe charges against the captain, sir; but I hope they won't prove true," said the seaman, with a salute.

"And mention one of them, my lad."

"Murder, sir, is one."

"Murder! great God! can they accuse Duke Gregory of so vile a crime?" said Arthur Nevil, excitedly.

"So it seems, sir; but we lads hope it is not true, for the young captain has won a great name."

"And I cannot believe it, my lad; give my compliments to Lieutenant Gregory."

"He is captain now, sir; he was promoted a short time since."

"Poor Gregory! promoted to a captaincy at his age, and this charge against him; well, give my compliments to Captain Duke Gregory, and say to him he has the sympathy of his officers and crew in his misfortune, and that we hope to have him back with flying colors."

"I'll do it, sir, and it will go right to his poor heart to know that you feel so," said the sailor, with deep feeling.

"Here, my man, the cabin boy has the baggage ready for you."

"Thank you, sir," politely returned the sailor, and with another salute he left the cabin, re-entered the gig he had come in, and rowed away up the harbor.

In a short while the large hull of the Dolphin loomed up ahead, and soon after came a hail from her deck:

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy! the Dolphin!"

"Ay, ay, what do you want?"

"We are a boat from the schooner-of-war Arrow, and wish to come on board," was the reply of the coxswain.

"Ay, ay, come on," came back the reply, and a moment after, armed with the baggage of Duke Gregory, the sailor went over the side and was directed to the officer of the deck.

"I am coxswain of Captain Gregory's gig, sir, and was sent by Lieutenant Nevil, with the

captain's baggage, sir," he said with a polite salute.

"All right, I see no reason why he should not have his luggage; I'll send it below to him."

"Might I please carry it, sir, as I have a message for him from Lieutenant Nevil?"

"Yes; here, Mr. Vance, show this man down to Captain Gregory's quarters, and tell the guard to permit him to pass in with his baggage," called out the officer of the deck to a young midly.

"Ay, ay, sir; this way, my man," sung out the gay young midly, and he led the sailor below.

In a state-room on the gun deck the unfortunate prisoner was seated, one wrist still in irons, and the chain attached to a heavy gun.

His head was drooped upon his breast, and he sat so still that one might think the monotonous tread of the marine guard before his door, might have lulled him to sleep.

But he waked up as the midly and sailor approached, and the latter said:

"Guard, permit this man to pass in with Captain Gregory's baggage, are orders from the officer of the deck."

The guard saluted, and while the midly retired, the sailor stepped within.

There was a battle lantern burning in the state-room, and by its light the officer and the sailor saw each other, and the former started, while involuntarily from his lips broke a suppressed cry.

"Sh—!" whispered the sailor, placing his finger upon his lips, and then saying aloud:

"Lieutenant Nevil, sir, sent me on board with your baggage, sir, and told me to give his compliments to you, sir, and say that himself and the crew gave you their sympathy, and hoped to see you back all right."

As the strange sailor spoke he quietly slipped into the hands of the prisoner a letter, unseen by the guard.

"I thank you, my lad, for bringing them; and the lieutenant for sending them; give my compliments to him."

"I will, sir, and I hope all will come right, for you have friends ashore, if not on ship-board, and they'll serve you," was the significant reply, and the strange sailor looked into the eyes of the officer in a way that he could not fail to understand his meaning.

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, my lad."

The sailor turned and left the prisoner, and soon after departed from the sloop-of-war.

Rapidly his oarsmen pulled back in the direction of the Arrow, until out of sight of the Dolphin's deck in the darkness, and then the coxswain put his helm apart and headed directly for the shore.

"You saw him?" asked the starboard oarsman.

"Yes, and gave him my letter."

"Did he recognize you, Mrs.—"

"Hold, Carl, and keep your wits about you," was the stern interruption.

"Pardon me; did he recognize you, Bond?"

"Yes, and he knows that I will not let him die; now while I go up to the tavern, you and Maddocks drop in among the grog shops, and see if you can hear any rumors whether he is to be taken to Washington for trial."

"We will, and then join you," answered Carl Carter; and the pretended coxswain springing ashore, the gig rowed further up along the wharves.

"That was a bold game to play on both vessels; but it was successful, and gives me hope that I may yet save my poor boy, for I brought all this trouble upon him."

So muttering, in a low earnest tone, the woman, Clarice Bond, disguised as a sailor, wended her way up into the town to her boarding-place, there to plot and plan the escape of her unfortunate son, Duke Gregory, over whom the shadow of death hung with all its horrors.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT THE PRISONER FOUND.

THE discovery which Duke Gregory had made regarding the strange sailor being none other than his mother in disguise, with her long gray hair cut short and dressed in man's attire, had well nigh exposed the deception; but the warning of Clarice had checked the words on his lips and he had remained silent, but wondering what strange freak she was playing, and what bold game she was planning.

When she had gone and he was left alone, he looked over his baggage, and at once discovered that there was something there that did not belong to him.

It was a leather roll containing articles that were quite heavy.

Seeing that the guard would not intrude, he turned his back on him, and took from his breast pocket the letter, which his disguised mother had thrust into his hand.

It had no address or signature, and was written in a feminine hand, which, though he had never seen his mother's writing, he felt confident was hers.

With strange emotion he read:

"The best laid plans of mice and men
Of gang awry."

"So went my plans, and the result is your fearful danger."

"A seaman, on one of the prizes you sent in, reported the hanging of Leroy Townsend to the Commodore, and thus it went to the Navy Department."

"This in itself would not have been so bad but that you could have explained it away, had it not been that the wakeful housekeeper at the Hall saw me in the grounds, and went to the room of her mistress, believing it to be her walking about in the moonlight, and almost suffocated by the burning herb, beheld Mrs. Townsend lying upon the bed, and dragged her out into the hall just in time to save her life."

"Thus the secret came out of an attempt to kill her; the absence of the judge set on foot inquiry, and no stranger was found to be dying at the village tavern, and your vessel was discovered standing seaward with all speed."

"Your sister accused you at once of instigating the murder of herself, and I was felt to be your ally, and orders were issued for my arrest, but the young sailor who rowed you out to the vessel heard all and came and warned me, and led me to a safe retreat."

"The judge not being found, and my disappearance, convinced all that you had laid a plot to kidnap him and kill your sister, to hide the fearful secret, and at once she gave it to the world in all its sadness and shame, and sent a full account to the Navy Department, adding that she felt her husband had been taken off on your vessel to be put to death by you."

"Upon the top of all this, came your prize officer in with the pirate schooner you captured, and he was sent for and questioned, and admitted that you had brought a prisoner on board when anchored near your home, and had him hanged a few hours after, without allowing the gag to be removed from his mouth; also, when pressed, he admitted your holding an interview with the prisoner, and his calling loudly for help."

"Again, he remembered that you called him Leroy in addressing him before he was swung off."

"These statements settled the entire accusations against you, and you were to be arrested by any naval officer, wherever finding you, and placed in irons, to be tried and summarily dealt with."

"Knowing that I had to save you, for I alone got you into your trouble, by my silly action in trusting to smoke instead of steel, to end the life of Grace Townsend, I determined to save you."

"I had saved up some money, and with it knew I could work well; and I engaged as my allies the same young sailor I have spoken of, and another who aided him to kidnap the judge."

"We went to Salem at night in a shallop, and from there took passage for Boston, where we caught a vessel bound to Baltimore, as I felt sure you would run your schooner in here, as you had said."

"I recognized from an eminence, your vessel far down the bay, and got ready to act at once."

"I was already disguised as a sailor, but to rig out as man-of-war's men was short work, when I saw you conveyed on board the Dolphin, and observing that you carried no baggage with you I took this excuse to see you."

"One of the cases, the leather one, which I leave with you, contains a brace of pistols, a knife, keys to fit your irons, and files if they fail, a wire to lower yourself from the port with, and gloves to prevent your cutting your hands thereby."

"There is, we have decided, that is my allies and I, but one life, the guard's, between you and liberty, and the port can be easily opened."

"In the dead of night release yourself of the irons, ask the guard to approach you for some reason, drive your knife to his heart, and then it is an easy matter to raise the port and lower yourself into the water by means of the wire."

"We will hover near in a boat and pick you up."

"The tide will be running up, and the starboard side, on which you are, will be presented to the Baltimore shore, so swim directly for the high point of land you see relieved against the western sky, and we will be in your track."

"If you do not come to-night, we will be on hand each night, in fact, we will not desert you until you are once more a free man, and escape will alone save you, as the Government will cut your career short with a rope."

"If you cannot live among honorable men, when no fault of your own made you what you are, you had better take your father's advice, and become a pirate."

"It is also the advice of your mother under existing circumstances."

Such was the letter of the strange woman, whose life had been so warped by the cruel act of Neil Gregory, that she had become a perfect fiend.

After reading it, he said firmly:

"No, I will bide my fate, be it the gallows."

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHANCE MEETING.

To her promise Clarice Bond and her allies, Carl Carter and Maddocks were in their boat,

hovering between the sloop-of-war Dolphin and the shore as soon as they left the vessel.

But hour after hour dragged wearily along and no sound came from the waters, no swimmer was seen upon them.

"Perhaps he can't swim," suggested Maddocks.

"He was the best swimmer on the coast when he was only a boy of twelve," answered the mother.

"He may have been discovered reading the letter, and thus caught he could not come," again said Maddocks, who was something of a croaker, unless things went immediately as he wanted them.

"Nonsense; had my letter been seen we would have been captured hours ago, for it distinctly stated we would be here."

Maddocks gazed uneasily around him.

"Perhaps he has suffered so much he is willing to die, to end his misery, and will not attempt to escape," suggested Carl Carter.

"That may be, Carl, for he is a strange youth; is not that a dark object upon the water?" and she pointed off about sixty feet.

"Yes, it is, and it looks like a man's head, and comes toward us."

Nearer and nearer came the object, and all three of those in the boats felt their hearts throbbing with hope; but with a sigh the disguised woman sunk back, as Carl Carter said:

"It is only a log the tide is carrying up with it."

And thus they continued their watch through the long hours of the night, and until the gray dawn stole over the waters, when they sadly headed their boat landward, and sought shelter in their humble quarters.

While the two men, utterly worn out with watching, sought rest, Clarice Bond left the house and went down to the shore, gazing out upon the harbor, and at the Dolphin, as she lay quietly upon the waters.

At last she saw a boat put off the shore, and in it were several officers.

She watched them land, saw one, a lieutenant, throw a piece of gold to the coxswain with which to treat his half-dozen oarsmen and walk away.

A moment after, the coxswain walked away, Clarice Bond well knew, to get a bottle of grog and some fruit for the lads, and swiftly she followed him.

"What's the chance, sir, of getting a berth on board Uncle Sam's fine sloop Dolphin?" she said politely, yet in an off-hand way, addressing the coxswain, as she overtook him.

"Oh! the chances are always good for a likely seaman; do you want to ship?" was the reply.

"I've been off on a cruise in southern waters, under as gallant a captain as ever trod a quarter-deck; but, poor gentleman, I fear he's got to the end of his cable, and I don't care to reshuffle on the schooner, so thought I'd try the Dolphin."

"What schooner were you on?"

"The Arrow."

"Ah! Captain Gregory's."

"Yes, sir."

"I expect, as you say, her commander has got to his cable's end."

"Do you think they'll hang him?"

"Certain."

"But can they prove all that is said against him?"

"Everything, poor fellow."

"You say poor fellow, and those are my sentiments, sir; so I beg you to come in and try a glass of spirits with me; we'll have breakfast, if you say so, and have time, for I haven't had mine yet."

"Nor I, as some of the Luffs were invited ashore, to breakfast with friends this morning, and we came before grub was called; but the senior Luff gave me a gold-piece to treat the lads with, as we had to wait a couple of hours or so."

"Well, you've got time, so come in and we'll have a good breakfast, and, as I'm flush, I'll send the lads a good spread and a couple of bottles of grog myself."

"Why, you're a prime fellow, and I will breakfast with you; what name do you cruise under, messmate?" said the delighted coxswain, who saw in the treat of his stranger friend, a chance to put in his own locker the gold-piece.

"Bond is my name, coxswain."

"And mine is Coxswain Roe, of the third cutter, and twenty years on blue water; where shall we go?"

"In here is where I got supper last night, and they feed well."

And into the half saloon, half eating-house the two men went, and Clarice at once called for two brandies with mint in them, and a breakfast as good as could be gotten up.

She felt, after her night on the water, and loss of rest, that she needed the liquor, and wished it to loosen the tongue of the coxswain, so that she might learn all that had happened on the Dolphin, to prevent the escape of Duke Gregory, and discover if he had an inkling of what was to be done with the prisoner.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COXSAIN'S STORY.

"BREAKFAST is a little slow in coming, Coxswain Roe, so let us have another brandy and mint," suggested Clarice, and nothing loth the seaman of the Dolphin agreed, and after a second glass he was as merry as a clam, and set to, to discuss the really tempting breakfast set before them with evident relish.

To gain the greater confidence of the coxswain Clarice said:

"That you may not feel you are getting what your lads miss, I'll just have the host fix some chickens, and in fact fix up a good breakfast for you to carry to them," and turning, she gave the order, adding to it a couple of bottles of grog.

"You're a true son of the sea, shipmate, and we must have you on board the Dolphin, for I never saw a freer man," said the delighted coxswain, dispatching steak, chicken and eggs with a rapidity that would have driven a dyspeptic mad with envy.

Clarice ate sparingly, and by degrees bent the conversation into the channel she wished to have it.

"I tell you, shipmate, if I may so call you—"

"Call me Roe—no, Dick, for Dick Roe is my name, and I feel as if I had known you a lifetime," said the champion eater.

"Well, Dick, you touch my heart when you speak of Captain Gregory as poor fellow, for he's the man to win a true sailor's regard, and I owe much to him, I can tell you, and am more sorry than I can tell that he should have gotten into trouble."

"So plenty of the lads say, and some even regret that his sister didn't die, and then the secret about him would not have come out; but he's got some friends, that's a fact, for they played a bold game on shipboard for him last night."

"Indeed! friends on board the Dolphin has he?" asked the woman with eager interest, while her heart almost ceased to beat.

"He has for a fact, and I'll prove my words; it seems the guard saw him reading a letter late in the night, and fearing that all was not right he stepped into the state-room and told him to hand it to him."

"The captain refused, and the guard insisted, so that the prisoner turned quickly and crumpling it up, thrust it into the flame of the lantern."

"Well, the guard sprung forward to get it out before it should burn, when the captain knocked him down."

"But he got up quickly and made a second attempt, when the captain seized him, and then they had it."

"Now, Marine Mike is the biggest man on board our ship, and he is a giant for strength; but he met his match in that elegantly-formed young captain, although he had an iron chain upon one wrist and one ankle."

"At it they went, the captain having Marine Mike by the throat, and by sheer strength keeping him away from the lantern, for the paper had not immediately ignited, and the noise of the fight, with the rattling of the chains, and stifled calls of the guard for help, soon brought officers and men to the scene."

"But the captain glanced around at the paper, and seeing that it was not all burned up yet, just kept every man out of that state-room, by knocking 'em back with Marine Mike."

"It was in vain they tried to get in, for back they were sent, until at last, seeing that the last scrap of paper had burned up, he threw Marine Mike out after them."

"All thought his troubles had made him go mad; but Marine Mike, as soon as he got breath, told the cause of the trouble."

"He impudently demanded a letter I was reading, and I burnt it up; he tried to seize it, and I punished him," was the captain's cool remark.

"And punish Marine Mike he did, for he was cut up and joked badly, and said he would as soon fight an African lion as that slender, handsome young officer, whose gripe was like steel."

"So they did not see the letter?" asked Clarice with suppressed emotion.

"No, indeed; but they searched his baggage, and they found there a letter his father had written him telling him who he was, and more, they discovered weapons, and tools for getting free of his irons and escaping with."

"Then they sent an officer over to the Arrow to ask the lieutenant in charge why he had sent him such implements, and he came back with the boat, and reported that a gig, with a coxswain and two men had come to the schooner, saying the captain had sent for his baggage, and that the leather roll of arms and tools had not been in it."

"Then the officers of both vessels knew they had been tricked by some friends of the captain, and they determined to keep a closer watch, and all say they are glad he is to be sent to Washington to-night."

"I thought they were going to hang him to the yard-arm of the Dolphin?" said Clarice.

"Oh, no, shipmate; they send him to Washington, for the Navy Department wish first to get a full report of his crime from him, and

then he is to be tried there; but the trial will be but a sham, as he will be hanged, sure."

"I expect so; does the Dolphin take him there?"

"Oh, no; he goes by an extra stage, half an hour after the regular coach, and an officer, coxswain, perhaps myself, and four marines go as guard, and we'll run through during the night."

Clarice Bond's eyes flashed, and her cheeks burned; but outwardly she was perfectly calm, and the coxswain having at last tired of eating, she paid the score, gave him the basket with the breakfast for his men, and promising to come on board and ship, left him, having already determined upon her course of action.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WOMAN AT WORK.

STRAIGHT to the stage office went Clarice Bond, for railroads were not known then, kind reader, and by inquiry she learned at what time the coach departed for Washington.

"There's a good lot of passengers going to-night, so we will run three coaches out, and orders were left here for an extra to follow," said the landlord of the tavern from whence the stages started, and who was the agent of the line.

"And they leave at seven, you say?"

"Yes, just after supper; all but the extra, and that goes at eight; if you want a seat you had better buy now."

"I'll come in again," said the woman, and leaving the tavern she wended her way rapidly to her own quarters, and waking her two allies, made known to them all that she had learned.

"Now, my friends, I have already formed a plan of action, and it will take the three of us to carry it out successfully, and it is our only chance to save the lad."

"You know you can depend upon me," said Carl Carter.

"And me," added Maddocks.

"I know it, and feel it; now, Maddocks, you know this town well, you say, having often been in port before, and I wish you to go and buy at once a fast-sailing fishing smack, of from fifteen to thirty tons, as you think best; engage then about four good seamen, who are not particular as to what they are shipped for, and store the craft with provisions for a long cruise, and get arms and ammunition for a dozen."

"Do this at once, and set sail down the bay, and by this chart I purchased as I came along, we will see where you are to go."

She spread the chart out before them, and all eagerly examined it.

"Here," she said, pointing with her finger, "is an inlet about two leagues this side of Annapolis, so run in there; the wind is fresh from the northward, and if you get off by noon, you can run there by sunset at furthest."

"Now do not delay a moment, and we will join you there at midnight; if not, wait there until you hear from me."

Maddocks quickly rigged himself out for his trip, received the money for his purchases from Clarice, and departed.

"Now, Carl, I have something for you to do, and there is no need for my telling you to act promptly, for I know that you will."

"I'll do my best."

"I know it."

"Well, what am I to do?"

"Go to a stable where they sell horses, and buy two good horses and a vehicle that three of us can crowd into."

"Drive to the cross-roads nearly half-way to Washington, and where the Annapolis road branches off."

"There leave your horses at the tavern, to be well cared for, and hire an animal to ride down to Annapolis."

"I am told that you can hire good horses there, so secure a good pair and a driver, and bribe him to keep his mouth shut, and drive back half-way toward the tavern at the cross-roads."

"There leave the driver and his team, with orders to go to a certain point you select, and there await your coming."

"Then mount your horse, and ride back to the tavern, pay your score, get your team, and meet me six miles this side of the cross-roads; do you understand?"

"Yes, if I am to meet you in the road."

"You are to meet the three stages bound to Washington, and continue on until the fourth appears in sight; if you see a lantern whirled once around from the box, instantly turn back and keep ahead, just out of sight, until you are hailed. I will be in that stage, or on the box, and so will be Duke Gregory."

"Now is all clear?"

"Yes."

"Here is the money."

"I'll not waste it."

"Gold must not be spared, Carl; let it flow like water."

"I'll do my best."

"Get good mules that can stand a run."

"I will."

"If I do not come to-night, wait at the cross-roads tavern until you hear from me."

"I will."

"You will have a ride and drive of over sixty miles, and it is now nine o'clock and after."

"I shall lose no time."

She saw the man depart, and then at once set to work to change her own appearance, for the secret of her visit to the Arrow and Dolphin having been discovered she feared she might be recognized and arrested, and thus thwart all her plans.

A false beard, which she had purchased of a hair-dresser, and some dark powder on her face, with a change of costume from sailor garb to a civilian's suit, did wholly change her beyond all recognition, and with deft hands she arranged the whiskers to look wholly natural.

Then she packed her luggage and left it in the room until she should call for it.

Going to the stage office, she looked about the stables, until she found out that the extra coach had really been engaged by the Government, to convey a prisoner to Washington, and was to leave the tavern at seven o'clock and drive down to the basin wharf where the boat from the Dolphin would meet it.

This was all to be kept secret, but a gold-piece to the driver who was to take the coach to the Capital, eked out the information.

"I say, my friend, could you not take a passenger on the box with you?" asked Clarice.

"It would be against orders, this being extra for Government," said the driver.

"But I can't get a seat in one of the regulars, and they won't run out another coach for a single passenger."

"The boss would storm."

"He need not know it, for I will join you after you leave the tavern."

"You might be seen."

"Say I'm one of the party, a detective, or whatever you like; and mind you, I'll pay you the entire fare and more too."

"Well, I ought to have an extra hand with me, for I drive out a mighty wild four to-night, that will give me all I can do to manage 'em."

"Good! then I'll be on hand, and join your four blocks from the tavern; here is your money."

The driver slipped the tempting gold into his pocket, and Clarice Bond strode back to her lodgings, fully satisfied with her morning's work.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER ALLY.

PROMPTLY Clarice Bond was at the rendezvous, made with the stage-driver, carpet-bag in hand.

Somewhat nervously she paced to and fro in her disguise, for she feared something might thwart her plans after all.

Perhaps the prisoner might not be sent that night.

Perhaps new orders had come from Washington regarding him.

Perhaps Maddocks might not reach the inlet on time; and yet the northerly wind had held good all day.

Perhaps Carl might not get the desired arrangements completed; and yet she knew he was most thorough.

Perhaps the officer in charge of the prisoner would prevent her going.

In that case she would hasten to secure a team to follow, and if she could only see the stage-driver she would make him carry out her plan if money would buy him.

All these fears floated through her brain, and as the market bell tolled seven o'clock she became almost wild.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed away, and she felt herself growing faint, when the rumble of wheels caught her ears.

Soon the stage appeared in sight, and she saw that the driver had indeed a spirited team.

Catching sight of Clarice, he drew up, and called out:

"Here, my man, put that rein in a lower curb on my leaders, please, as they pull hard."

Quickly Clarice obeyed.

"Now, if you've nothing to do, you can mount with me, and help me a trifle."

The carpet-bag quickly found a resting-place under the box seat, and up clambered Clarice, her heart almost at a standstill.

"My man, you have kept your word; here is more gold for you."

"Jewlikens! but you spend your gold free," said the delighted Jehu.

"I have a motive, and if you wish to make a couple of hundred dollars, and not get yourself in trouble, you can do it."

"It's more than I make in the year."

"Will you do as I ask?"

"What is it?"

"Let your team run away at a given place that I will point out to you?"

"Jewlikens! they'd tear the town up."

"But it is not in the town."

"Where then?"

"On the road, some miles before you come to the Annapolis cross-roads."

"They'd kill us all."

"No, you need not let them run away, only appear to do so."

"What in thunder's up?"

"I'll make it three hundred."
 "No necks broken?"
 "No."
 "No risk to me?"
 "No."
 "Nobody shall know I do it!"
 "No."
 "Three hundred dollars?"
 "Yes."
 "Got 'em with you?"
 "Here they are; take them now."
 "I'm the Jehu you is looking for," and the gold followed its companions into the driver's spacious pocket.

"Now talk," he said, bluntly.
 "I wish you to run into some hole, and tell all hands to get out, excepting the prisoner, and give a push at the wheels; then let the horses go ahead at a run, and leave the party behind; you can call back that they are running away."

"Well?"
 "After you have run several miles you can draw up, and drive back slowly, and tell the officer and his men, when you meet them, that the prisoner jumped out and escaped."

"Lordy!"
 "Is there any risk to you in this?"
 "Can't see it exactly."
 "You have a wild team you say?"
 "Yes, indeed; they're lightning, and the boys at the stable said they'd get away with me."
 "Then that would clear you, if anything happened; but mind you, get into a place that you can get out of at a run."

"I'll do it."
 "I tell you this now in case the officer refuses to let me go."

"What will you do?"
 "Go to the nearest stable and follow in a hired team; then pass you and keep on ahead."
 "You're lightning; guess you're interested in the prisoner."

"Yes."
 "You've put up a good job."
 "And, with your aid will carry it out."
 "It's a little ticklish."
 "Here take these odd pieces of gold, and say no more about it."

"I'll do it, and when Tim Burns pledges his word, he'll keep it, for you've been good to me, and I can just fix the old woman and little ones in a snug cottage three years sooner than I laid out I could do."

"Enough, there is the dock, and I see the boat coming in."

"She's coming, and there's a good party on board; you hold 'em, and I'll jump down, so as they won't notice you, for I want you along on the box with me, as you gives me grit."

The coach drew up then, just as the boat touched the wharf, and the beginning of the end was near.

CHAPTER XXV. A RUNAWAY.

NERVOUSLY did Clarice Bond watch the boat land, and the person who got out of it.

First an officer, enveloped in a cloak got out, and following him came a sergeant of marines. Then followed, aided by two marines, the prisoner, heavily ironed.

Next two other marines, and a sailor carrying some baggage.

"Seven besides poor Duke," muttered the woman between her shut teeth.

The officer addressed the driver, and told him to drive to the landing upon arrival in Washington, opposite to where a vessel of war was anchored, as the prisoner was to be taken on board of her.

Then Clarice feared that he was going to ride upon the box, but glancing up he saw her, and asked:

"Who have you there with you, driver?"
 "My attendant, sir, from the stable."
 "Oh yes; well, are you all ready?"
 "As soon as you get in, sir."

The officer entered first, taking a back seat. Then Duke Gregory was aided in, and Clarice Bond observed that he was ironed on his ankles as well as wrists, and that heavy chains connected the upper and lower manacles.

"So much the better; he will not be asked to get out to lighten the stage," she said grimly.

Duke took the back seat, by the side of the officer, and the sergeant, his four marines and the sailor occupied the other two seats, the baggage being thrown on the top.

A few idlers about the dock saw the departure of the stage, but no word was spoken by them.

"All ready, driver," said the officer.
 "Yes, sir; get up, critters," and the driver sent his horses along at a quick trot.

"So far good," he said to the woman.

"Yes, we have crossed the Rubicon," she answered.

"You mean Baltimore street," remarked the man, not understanding her classical application.

"Yes," murmured Clarice, not caring to give lessons in ancient history then.

"Oh, that's ahead of us; yonder where you see that lamp swinging across the street."

Clarice made no reply, and the stage rolled

swiftly, passed off the paved streets, out upon the country road, and the horses moved on at a brisk pace, evidently very willing to go.

Within, all was as silent as though the occupants were dead, though an occasional whiff of smoke out of each window showed that the officer and his prisoner were both enjoying a cigar, whatever might be the subject of their thoughts.

"How far have you come now?" asked the woman, as the stage rolled away from the Relay, where the horses were changed, another spirited four being hitched in their stead.

"Ten miles."

"Then soon you must get stalled in a ditch."

"Yes, and I know the exact place."

"I am glad of it; all depends upon you now."

"You have seen me handle the ribbons?"

"Yes."

"I hope I do it to suit you?"

"Yes, thoroughly."

"Then don't worry, sir, for I'll play my part same as a theater-actor, for having been stuck in the place in bad weather, I guess I can play stuck now."

"I leave all to you."

"You have paid well for my services, and you shall have 'em, I'll swear; but I see a vehicle ahead."

"Ah!"

Instantly Clarice Bond took a dark lantern from beside her on the seat, raised the slide, and made a circling motion with it, and then closed it quickly.

"What in thunder is that?" asked the driver.

"A signal for that vehicle, if it is the one I hope it is; if not, there will be no harm done."

"That's so. Well, he's turning round."

"Then it is the one I hope it is; now find your stalling place as soon as you please and do your duty."

"It's right round the bend."

The driver now devoted himself to his horses, and watching the road carefully, as the stage rolled upon a piece of causeway, he suddenly drew his wheel horses sharply one side, and down went the left wheels of the coach off the end of the logs laid down across the bog.

The sudden drop on one side shook those up considerably within the coach, and would have thrown Clarice from the box, had she not been prepared for it.

"Godd darn them hosses, sbying like that! they has got my wheels off the causeway," cried the driver in a loud voice.

"I should think so; is anything broken?" asked the officer, putting his head out of the window.

"I guesses not, sir; but it will be a hard pull out of here, and I'll have to ask you all to get out and give me a lighter load to draw."

"All right; myself and men will get out, but the prisoner is heavily ironed, and—"

"Oh he can stay in, sir; his weight won't make much difference; here, Benny, you take the lines of the leaders, and I'll manage two wheelers," said the driver.

Out of the coach sprang the officer, and rapidly the others followed him, and the door was closed to, leaving only the prisoner within.

"Now, all ready!" sung out the driver.

At the same time he showed his skill with the whip and rein, and the horses bounded forward, and after a short pull dragged the wheels back on the causeway, and then away they dashed at lightning speed.

"Hold! stop! Driver, for God's sake hold them!" yelled the naval officer.

"Help me! catch 'em, for they is running away!" yelled back the driver, at the same time giving them free rein and urging them on.

The officers and marines gave chase, but as well might they have attempted to catch the wind.

The stage swayed wildly from side to side, and bounded over the rough causeway at terrific speed.

But the driver had now all his reins in hand, and held control over the frightened team, and felt his ability to check them, for his foot was on the brake, ready for use if needed.

"It's a clear runaway," he cried in real glee, and the next moment they struck the dirt road.

"Now let them go," said Clarence Bond.

"I'll do it sure; Lordy, that officer and his men will die of running, but in ten minutes we'll leave 'em two miles back; but I don't hear anything from the prisoner."

"I suppose he would rather be dashed against a tree and killed, than hanged, so take it easy," remarked the woman grimly.

"I s'pose so; but hain't we ripping along?"

"We are indeed, and you are a splendid driver."

"Ought to be; been fifteen year at it, man and boy, over this very road."

For a short while the two remained silent, while the horses thundered along, and then the driver said:

"There's that vehicle ahead."

"All right; how far behind are the pursuers?"

"Over two miles."

"Then catch up with yonder vehicle and draw up, and we'll leave you."

"Sorry to have you go, fer you are a prime fellow; but I'll just break my brake, and swear

I couldn't stop 'em afore, though they is almighty willing to stop now."

"Hol! Carl ahoy!" sung out Clarice Bond in hoarse tones, as they came up behind the vehicle.

"Ay, ay, Bond."

"Draw rein and we'll make the changes now."

"Ay, ay," and the vehicle and the coach stopped side by side in the road.

"Here, give this to the little ones, for you have done nobly," and slipping a few gold-pieces into the driver's hand, Clarice Bond clambered down from the box, and threw open the stage door.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ESCAPE.

"DUKE GREGORY ahoy!"

The words broke excitedly from the woman's lips.

"Good God! you!" came from within the dark stage.

"Yes, and I am here to save you; here, Carl, aid him into your carriage, and be quick about it."

"But—"

"No buts to me, Duke; you must do as I say: aid yourself all you can, while I hold these horses."

He silently obeyed, and the transfer was quickly made.

"Here's your baggage, my friend, and I am obliged to you forever; luck to you all, say I."

"Now I must go back and pick up my party and tell them the prisoner jumped out and got away, and I'll not be lying, that's certain."

"Good-by all."

The honest driver saw the vehicle dash away, and having dislocated his brake, turned his tired horses back for his party.

A drive back of a couple of miles and he met them coming on as rapidly as they could, and nearly tired out by their run.

"Well, thank God, you stopped them," gasped the officer.

"That cussed brake broke, sir, or they'd not got away with me; but your prisoner has gone."

"Good God! gone?"

"He has for sure; when I got 'em down to a walk, the door suddenly opened and he lighted out like a deer, having gotten his irons off his legs."

"There has been treachery in this, by the Heaven above!" and just then, the sergeant and marines, in their excitement joining in chorus, there was a volley of oaths issued, that would have done credit to the army in Flanders.

"He may be taken, sir, for the young man with me went off in pursuit, and he's a good runner; innocently said the driver.

"Quick! drive us to the point where he escaped; and I will mount with you."

Off the stage started once more, but the driver did not go very fast, urging as a reason, his brake being broken, he feared his team might get away with him again.

"Here's about where he lit out," said the driver, drawing up at a spot about half a mile before he came to the real place, and adding, to relieve his conscience of the lie:

"As near as I can recall, being busy with my horses."

It was a gloomy spot in a dense forest, and to look for a prisoner there, was about equal to the figurative task of finding a needle in a haystack.

But the lieutenant dismounted and set his men to work.

They halloosed, as though they expected the prisoner to answer them.

But only silence was the response, excepting the dismal hooting of a disturbed owl.

"Your man ought to answer, if he is anywhere near," said the officer to the driver.

"That's so, sir; but he's a good runner, as I told you, and may have gone on out of hearing."

"I'll give a year's pay to catch that man," said the officer, adding *sotto voce*:

"It will all be blamed on me, though I am at heart innocent."

"I wonder what his pay is a year," thought the driver; but his better nature gaining the ascendancy, he added:

"No, I'll not go back on those as did the square thing by me, if he was an admiral, and offered me his pay."

Then aloud he said:

"The Annapolis cross-roads, sir, is about three miles from here, and we might drive on there and see what can be done."

"All right; we can get horses there, and in the morning make a thorough search of the surroundings and I believe we can capture him. I also wish to send a messenger to Washington and Baltimore to make a report of his escape and ask advice."

Into the stage they got and on it rolled to the cross-roads tavern.

There was a fresh relay of horses waiting the stage, for those on ahead had reported its coming; but after a consultation with the landlord, the naval officer decided that all he could do would be to dispatch messengers post haste to

Washington and Baltimore, and await the dawn when a search party would be sent out.

Tim Burns, the driver, drove round to the stables, just as he saw a man come up with a bundle on a stick, and whom at a glance he recognized.

"Hullo, Ben Towsey, where from?" he asked. "Annapolis, Tim, and I'm glad to see you, for I guess you'll give me a lift on to the city," was the answer.

"Come here, Ben," and the driver drew his friend aside.

"You always consider that you owe me a great debt?" he said.

"I do indeed, Tim; you pulled me out of the Patapsco once, when I was about gone, and I haven't paid for the funeral of my mother yet, whom you buried when I was away from home," answered the man, with feeling.

"Well, Ben Towsey, you can pay those debts this very night by doing me a favor."

"Indeed I will."

"Mind you, no questions, only do as I say, and no talk about it, and you don't owe me a cent, and can get a little gold in your pocket besides."

"What is it, Tim?"

"Listen to me: I am just in as an extra from Baltimore."

"Yes."

"I had a navy officer, six marines and a prisoner, I took in at the Basin dock."

"Yes."

"I got off the end of the causeway back in the bog, by my wheelers shying; you see?"

"Yes."

"All inside got out but the prisoner, and you and me on the box."

"Me, Tim?"

"Yes, you, Ben Towsey; you was on the box with me, and when we started the critters up the brake broke, and they ran away, going two mile before I could draw 'em up."

"Did they, Tim?"

"They did; well, just as I got 'em down to a walk, the stage door flew open, and out jumped the prisoner, having gotten his irons off his ankles, but not off his wrists, and away he went."

"He did?"

"Yes, and you, when I told you, jumped down and went in chase."

"Me! why, Tim?"

"I'm talking, Ben Towsey, and you is listening; yes, you went into the forest after him, and not being able to find him, you came on to the tavern here, and I now want you to go in and tell the officer so."

"But what good will it do, Tim?"

"It will get me out of a scrape."

"Then I'll do it."

"You see I was not allowed to take anybody with me, the Government having chartered the stage; but the company, knowing you used to work for 'em, and my having a wild team, wouldn't mind my asking you, when I saw you in Baltimore, you see, and got into trouble with my critters."

"I'll do it, Tim."

"And I'll not forget you; here, friend, luck hasn't been good to you o' late, and this will give you a lift," and the driver gave the man a few pieces of gold, which he received with a most thankful heart, for fortune had been down on him of late, as he expressed it.

Into the tavern they went, and calling the lieutenant aside, Tim the driver told him that Ben Towsey was the man who had come over with him, and pursued the prisoner, but could not catch him, and so came on to the tavern.

Then Ben told his story as if it were all true, and the lieutenant said:

"Now, my man, if you wish to make a good round sum, carry dispatches back for me to Baltimore, and on board the sloop-of-war Dolphin."

"I'll do it, sir," was the ready response, and fifteen minutes later, mounted on a fleet horse, Ben Towsey, with whom the tide of luck had changed, started for Baltimore, just as another messenger left for Washington.

And with the dawn a search party, well mounted, started in pursuit of the prisoner, and all day long hunted diligently for him.

But night came and no trace of him could be found, and the messengers returned to the tavern, with orders to the lieutenant to give up the search, and the Government would proclaim Duke Gregory a deserter and an outlaw.

Tim Burns drove the party back, and Ben Towsey, richer by a golden reward from the lieutenant, went on the box with him, and three days after the escaped prisoner was posted by his Government as a deserter and outlaw, and upon his head, dead or alive, a reward of ten thousand dollars was offered, and Duke Gregory the disowned son, became an outcast and a hunted man, with no flag and no country, despised by those who had once admired him, and hated by those who had once loved him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FLIGHT OF THE FUGITIVES.

I WILL now return to the vehicle, in which Duke Gregory was driven rapidly away, from the spot where it met the stage.

Not only had Carl Carter carried out the orders of Clarice Bond most thoroughly; but he had also made himself acquainted with the shortest and best roads, and quickly turned off of the post highway into a country way leading to the left.

Along this the horses were urged at their fastest trot, Carl Carter driving, and Clarice Bond by his side, while on the back seat sat Duke Gregory silent and stern.

For some time no word was spoken, other than a question of the woman about the roads, and then came a question from the prisoner:

"Why have you done this?"

"To save you from the rope."

"It will be useless."

"Why?"

"The whole country will be scoured for me and I will be retaken, or—"

"Or what?"

"Or take my own life to prevent."

"Nonsense."

"I mean it."

"And I say nonsense, for you cannot be retaken."

"Why?"

"I have laid my plans too well."

"The reward offered will cause those who conceal me to betray me."

"You will not remain on land, Duke."

"What mean you?"

"You will be on a vessel's deck within two hours."

"What?"

"I cannot say how good a craft it may be; but I have secured a vessel, and we are now driving to the inlet where we hope to meet her."

"You are a wonderful woman," said the son.

"I am not a woman to see my son hang, and I hope you did not think I would desert you."

"No, but I did not see how you could aid me."

"I had to fly to save myself, and this person is our good friend, Carl Carter, who put you on the Arrow that fatal night; the one now in charge of the vessel we seek, is his shipmate, Maddocks, and both are good men and true."

"I do not doubt it, and I owe them more than I can ever repay," said Duke Gregory, sadly.

"I am repaid in serving Mrs. Bond, Sir," was Carl Carter's response, and then he added:

"And Maddocks serves me."

"Well, I fortunately have plenty of money with me, and diamonds that will bring more, as I invested my prize money that way, so my good lad you will not want for financial payment I assure you."

"Now tell me, can I not get rid of these irons?"

"Hail woman-like I have forgotten something. I have no key, or file," cried Mrs. Bond. "But I have; try these," and Carl Carter handed back a bunch of keys.

Seizing them eagerly, Clarice Bond tried one after the other in the irons, and at last a cry of joy broke from her, as she found one to fit, while from the lips of Duke Gregory, as the chains dropped off, came a fervent:

"Thank God! now I am free."

Just then Carl turned the horses into an opening leading into the forest, and drawing rein gave a long, shrill whistle.

It was answered from further on in the woods, and immediately after a vehicle was heard approaching.

"Now we change, for our horses are well-nigh fagged out," said the young sailor.

The two vehicles were now side by side, and the prisoner and Clarice Bond got into the other one, while the driver of it took Carl's seat just vacated in the other.

"As I told you, this team is yours for your work and silence; this team, hired from you, I will leave where you directed, for you to get," said Carl.

"Yes, at my uncle's; Peter Lowell is his name, and his farm is not far from where you said your boat would meet you."

"Just ask uncle Peter to take care of them for me, and tell him you are going across to the eastern shore for a hunt after ducks," replied the man.

"Remember, silence is the word," again urged Carl.

"I'm dumb as an oyster, and you've paid me well, and I'll not forget it."

"Luck to you, and good-night."

The man drove away on the road to Annapolis, and Carl, taking the reins of the new team sent them off at a swift pace toward the inlet where they expected to meet the vessel with Maddocks on board.

Not sparing the team they were not long in reaching the farm of Peter Lowell, which Carl Carter recognized by the description given him of it, and out over the dark waters, just coming into an inlet above, a small vessel was discerned.

While Carl Carter drove on with the wagon to the farm-house, Duke Gregory and his mother took their baggage, and the chains, which the man clung to tenaciously, and started for the shore.

The vessel had in the mean time run close inshore, and lay to, and the mother and son stood

regarding her until rejoined by Carl Carter, who said:

"The team is all right; now to get on board the craft."

"We waited for you, Carl, to hail," said the woman.

"Ho the Maddocks aboy!" sung out Carl Carter in seamanlike tones.

"Ho the shore!" came back the response.

"It is Maddocks's voice."

"And we are safe," eagerly cried Clarice Bond.

"Don't anchor; but send a boat ashore, Matt," cried Carl, and instantly the order was obeyed, and five minutes after the fugitives stood on the deck of a trim craft as any yachtsman would care to command.

"You have done nobly, Maddocks," cried Clarice Bond eagerly.

"Yes, she's a beauty, and hard luck made her owner let her go cheap."

"Now, Captain Duke, be good enough to take command of your vessel," and Clarice, with tears in her eyes, which the darkness only hid, and a voice, with a quiver she could not control, laid her hand on the shoulder of the tall, splendid-looking but hunted man at her side.

"From my heart I thank you, mother—"

"You mistake, Captain Duke, my name is Bond."

"Ah! well, all the same I owe to you, and to your brave friends my life, and as you ask me to be captain, Mr. Carter shall be my first, and Mr. Maddocks my second officers; now how many in crew have you?" and Duke turned to Maddocks.

"Six, for I could not work her well with less."

"You can trust them?"

"For gold?"

"Enough; I know how to manage them. Mr. Carter, please get the—"

"Mischief is her name," put in Maddocks.

"She is well named; please get the Mischief under way, Mr. Carter, and head for Baltimore."

"For Baltimore?"

The cry broke simultaneously from the lips of the woman and her two allies.

"Yes; I will not be caught for there, and in disguise can evade all suspicion and search."

"Yes, to Baltimore we go, for I have a solemn duty to perform there," was the stern reply of Duke Gregory.

There was no remonstrance from any one, and under a cloud of canvas the fleet vessel put back for the port from which her daring commander had escaped only a few hours before.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHY THE MISCHIEF RETURNED.

It was noon, and eight bells had just pealed forth from the schooner-of-war Arrow, as the Mischief sailed slowly by, on her way up the harbor, and not her deck's length away from the saucy craft.

Lieutenant Arthur Nevil was on the quarter-deck, and the crew leaped forward, and all gazed with admiration upon the pretty craft, as she sailed by, little dreaming that the tall form at her helm, dressed in pea-jacket, white duck pants and tarpaulin, and disguised by the beard which his mother wore the night before, was Duke Gregory, the gallant young captain, who had so suddenly fallen as it were from Heaven to Hell.

Confident in his disguise Duke Gregory gazed grimly at the schooner, and ordered the flag of the Mischief dipped three times in her honor, and then, in sheer recklessness, held on a course that would carry him directly under the stern of the lofty sloop-of-war.

"Be careful, Duke," said his mother, from her stand in the companionway; but he made no reply, and keeping on held near the vessel which he had left eighteen hours before in double irons, and now beheld a free man, even if he was branded with the curse of desertion and outlawry.

Running up to a secluded part of the harbor, the Mischief dropped anchor, and then Duke Gregory called the crew aft, and said bluntly:

"My lads, I am sailing this craft under secret orders, and it is my command that no one goes ashore without my permission, for I may hoist anchor at any moment."

"Serve me well and your pay shall not be governed by seamen's wages; act to the contrary of my commands, and you'll regret it."

The men received this little speech with favor, for they were of a class that cared to ask no questions, so that they got liberal pay.

Going into the cabin, where his mother was, Duke Gregory, or Captain Duke as all on board called him, called to Carl Carter to follow him, and said:

"Carter, it is my desire to get a thorough disguise, for I have work to do on shore, and I wish you to land and procure it for me."

"Maddocks will set you ashore, for I can not risk those fellows until I have learned more of them, and if they land they may hear that a certain prisoner has escaped from the guard of the Dolphin, who had him in charge."

"Here is money, and remember, I wish a dis-

guise so complete that my mother will not recognize me in it, for capture to me means instant death, and I have decided not to die yet awhile."

The man's nature was already changing, and with his reckless humor the look of intense sadness that had haunted his face of late was fading away.

Dressed in his neat sailor suit Carl Carter left the yacht, in its little yawl, while Clarice Bond, as soon as he had departed from the cabin, turned to her son and said:

"Duke, you are hiding something from me."

"How mean you, mother?"

"In coming here."

"I meant not to."

"Why have you returned to the very spot from whence you escaped?"

"This port and city would be the last place in which I would be sought, so I am comparatively safe."

"That is not your only reason."

"No."

"You have another, Duke?"

"I have, mother, and you seem obtuse in not having discovered it."

"I confess to it then."

"Have you forgotten that I am married?"

"Hail in my anxiety for you, I had forgotten your poor wife."

"I had not."

"Poor girl, all this will reach her ears," said the mother, sadly.

"Yes, and it will break her heart unless I can see her and tell her that I am not at all to blame, and unless she can see you."

"Would to Heaven I could see her."

"You shall."

"But how?"

"I will seek her."

"But where?"

"This is her old home; here we were married, and though she may not be here now, there are those that will know where she is."

"I fear not."

"I am hopeful, for, where had she to go, after that wretch, Neil Gregory, drove her from his door, the possessor of the fateful secret regarding me."

"Would that I had known who she was, gladly would I have taken her and her child to my heart and my home," said Clarice with feeling.

"I know it, mother; ah, my poor, poor child; what an inheritance will I leave it."

"It must never know, Duke."

"No, it must never know, and wither the tongue that tells it," he said fiercely; and then he added in a pitiful tone:

"Would to high Heaven poor Eva, my darling wife, had never known."

"But she will not desert you, though she does know, Duke."

"So I feel, mother; if I thought the contrary, and that my child would be raised to hate its father, I would go mad, yes, mad! mad! mad!"

He almost shrieked forth the words, and his mother, seeing the wild look upon his face, arose and put her hand soothingly upon his brow.

"Mother," he said after a short silence, "wrong and blighted love made you wicked, for you are wicked, having done some evil things; but if my wife turns against me, by the God above, I will become a very demon."

"Ay, I will follow my accursed father's advice, and yours too, and flaunt the black flag on the seas, and woe be to those who would hunt me down, for they would find a madman upon the quarter-deck, and a mad crew at the guns."

"Duke, my poor boy, you frighten me by your words and manner; calm yourself, for if Eva is the woman I believe her to be, she will never turn from you in your dire grief and shame."

"So I believe, mother, and this is why I came back here; this is why I have sent Carl ashore after a disguise, for I intend to search for her."

"You must be cautious, Duke."

"Cautious? do they not say madmen are ever cunning and cautious?"

"Well, I believe I am mad, mother, so have no fear."

"If Eva deserts me, then will I be mad indeed."

"Ha! ha! ha! the Mad Mariner," and with this mocking laughter, the poor fellow went on deck, while bowing her face in her hands with grief, Clarice Bond cried in bitterness of spirit:

"Good God! his sorrows have turned his brain, and he is mad."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE JEW PEDDLER.

"Oh, I cannot believe it; no, I cannot believe it."

"Yet it is true, Eva."

"Were it true, then his shame would be my shame and his child's."

"Eva Raymond, you are a fool."

"I am not Eva Raymond, but Eva Gregory, for his name is mine, dishonored though it be, and if I am a fool, I am at least not sinful."

The speakers were a man and woman.

The former was perhaps thirty years of age,

fashionably attired, and would have been handsome were it not that his face was marred by reckless dissipation.

His name was Henry Moreland, and he was supposed to be a very wealthy young man, or would be at his father's death, though he squandered money with a lavish hand in wild dissipation and extravagances.

The woman the reader has met before, for it is she that was Eva Raymond, and whom Duke Gregory had made his wife.

Still wondrously beautiful, even more so than when first met by the reader on the Monarch in Mobile Bay, she is yet very pale, and a constant look of expectation, of hope deferred, haunts her beautiful eyes.

She is attired neatly, but plainly, and her rooms show that she does not live luxuriously.

A parlor and bedroom are all, and they are plainly furnished, yet comfortable.

In one corner is a crib, in which sleeps a young child, and in front of the mother is an easel with a half-finished picture upon it.

"Drop that man's name, Eva, for he will surely be hanged, while it is already dishonored by his birth."

"Take your old name—"

"Which is loaded down with debt and stained by the suicide of my poor father," she said, sadly.

"The world will forgive debt and suicide, Eva, but not—"

"Silence! you shall no longer slander my husband, Henry Moreland."

"You are my cousin, yes, and you sought my love before I met Duke Gregory, and I refused it; then, in my misfortune, you alone came to my aid, and rented these rooms and furnished them for me, and allowed me the chance to make my own living through my painting."

"But now, Henry, you come to me, and urge that I give up my husband and become your wife."

"It is an insult, and you know it, for I love him, and am bound to him, and—"

"But the law will release you under the circumstances."

"I wish no release, nor shall I ask for any; I have not heard Duke's side of the story yet, and I believe he is more sinned against than sinning."

"I repeat, Eva, you are a fool; I would give you a luxurious home, and even care for his child, while—"

"Henry Moreland, leave me, and never again darken that door, for you insult me by your offer, as you know well that you do."

"I owe you a small sum of money, but it shall be paid, for thank God I am able now to save a few dollars from my work. Go, sir, and know that I read your base heart, and have before, only, as the only tie I had to connect me with my kindred and the past, I have not wanted to give you up."

"Go!"

She arose to her full height, and pointed to the door, while her lips curled and her eyes flashed with indignant scorn.

"I shall obey, my beautiful Eva, but I do not give you up."

"I registered a solemn oath when you were but fifteen that you should be mine, and the six years that have passed since, have not caused me to forget it."

"You earn your living with your brush, do you?"

"Well, I have caused those paintings to be bought, as you would not take money from me; but now we shall see if you can keep yourself and that brat from starving."

"And when you do grow hungry, when that child screams for food you have no money to buy, come to me, and I will take care of you."

"Adieu, my sweet cousin Eva."

He bowed satirically, took his hat from the table and left the room, almost knocking down a person who seemed just about to knock at the door.

"Mine Got! ish you wants to kill a mansh? cried the individual in question, and whose visage none could mistake for other than a Jew's."

He was a man of fifty perhaps, with gray hair and beard, and wore large spectacles, which did not wholly conceal his black eyes, still full of fire.

Upon his back he carried a pack, designating his occupation as a peddler of small wares, and in his hand he held a long, stout cane.

"Curse you, Jew, what do you want here?" said the exquisite Henry Moreland, angrily, rubbing his shins, which had come in rude contact with the peddler's cane.

"I ish vant to see your ladish, mine fri'nt."

"Oh, yes, you expect to drive a trade, but little it is you'll do there, for the lady is a pauper, sir; has not a dollar in the world except what my charity has given her, and I intend to cut that off now."

"Ish dat so?" queried the Jew.

"Yes; but go in and see if you can drive a bargain with her, for the sooner she spends the little she has on follies, the sooner she will come to starvation."

And flinging open the door again, Henry Moreland said with sarcasm:

"Here, my sweet cousin, is a gentleman from Jerusalem, with all the styles and fashions, and nick-nacks in abundance to tempt your plethoric purse."

"Buy of him out of the plenty that you have—"

"Henry Moreland have you no mercy?" and the poor woman raised her head from her hands, where they had sunk, upon his departure, and gazed appealingly at him.

"Mercy! I know not the word, unless you do as I wish."

"No, no, sir, I do not need your wares; I am poor, oh, so very poor, and have no money," and Eva turned to the Jew peddler.

"Yes, Jew, she is poor in pocket, but rich in beauty; but she has a few dollars left, and if you have a good new rope, strong enough to support a man's weight, she will purchase it, as a present to her accursed husband, who is to be hanged in a few days."

A shriek for mercy from poor Eva, as she sunk down in her chair, and a growl, such as a wild beast might utter in anger, mingled together.

Then, with the spring of a panther, the Jew peddler was upon the insulter, a knife gleamed in his hand, and once, twice, thrice, it descended into the bosom of Harry Moreland, dyeing the ruffled shirt-front crimson.

A stifled cry, a groan, a gasping, and Harry Moreland sunk dead in his tracks, and over him bent the Jew peddler, his red-dyed knife in hand, his pack still upon his back, and unconscious upon the floor lay Eva, at the foot of her easel, while the young child, awakened by the noise, half raised itself in its crib and gazed wonderingly upon the tragic scene.

CHAPTER XXX.

DRIVEN BY FATE.

THE fearful tableau in the rooms of Eva Gregory lasted for an instant, each figure remaining as quiet as though carved in stone.

Then the Jew turned and glanced at the fallen form of the woman, and cried, with no accent in his tone:

"Good God! what have I done? Oh cruel Fate, do you still drive me on, and have you no mercy upon me?"

His cry was piteous in the extreme, and throwing aside his pack he knelt by the side of the woman, and placed his hand upon her heart.

"She has fainted. God grant she soon recover, for if I have found her to lose her I will indeed go mad."

He raised her in his arms, with as much care as though she were a child, and carrying her into the adjoining room placed her upon the bed.

"Now let me put this hideous form from sight ere she recovers," he muttered.

He bent over the dead body of Harry Moreland as he spoke, and then glanced around for a place to hide it in.

But none met his eye.

Going to the door he looked cautiously outside, and his gaze fell upon a wood box which was standing near.

It was locked; but a bunch of burglars' keys taken from his pocket, quickly unfastened it.

In the bottom was a little kindling, and that was all.

Returning to the room he raised the body and placed it in the box, again locking it.

The little child had in the meantime dropped back on its pillow and gone to sleep.

With cautious tread he crossed over to the crib, and bending kissed its red lips, while the tears started to his eyes.

With a low moan, as though he suffered great mental anguish, he turned away and entered the bedchamber.

Eva, beautiful as a marble image, lay still unconscious.

"My God! what shall I do?" murmured the man.

"I dare not call for help, for in returning to consciousness, and beholding me, she may betray all— Ah! I will go after my mother and bring her here."

He imprinted a kiss on the white face of the insensible woman, seizing his pack threw it upon his back and quickly left the room and house.

At a rapid pace he hurried down toward the harbor, and securing a boatman bade him row him out to a trim craft that lay at anchor not far away.

Paying the boatman, who rapidly rowed shoreward for another fare, he entered the cabin, where a woman and two men were seated at their evening meal.

"What! back so soon, Duke?" cried the woman rising.

"Yes, back again, and still dogged by ac-

cursed Fate; but come, mother, get your disguise on, and go with me, for I have found my wife and child," and the man sunk into a chair almost overcome.

"Found them?"

"Yes, and again reddened my hand with blood, for I found there a wretch who sought to insult and wrong her, and before her very eyes, and the eyes of our child I took his life."

"Great God! Duke Gregory, did you do this?"

"Yes, but she did not know me; I left her in a deep swoon, strangely like death, and the child asleep, and hiding the body came after you."

"I will go at once, Duke; but how about the body?" said the cautious woman.

"I do not know; it is safely hidden for the present."

"Then to-night it must be removed: a trunk will answer, and—"

"I will purchase a trunk and carry it there, and bring the body in it on board; when the crew are below to-night, I can drop it overboard and the tide will carry it away," said Carl Carter.

"A good idea; the address is number 13 Eutaw Row; but come, mother, will you never be ready?"

"I am ready now, Duke; come!"

Maddocks put them ashore in the boat, and then returned to the yacht, while the mother and son went direct to the humble home of the young wife, and Carl started in search of a trunk-shop.

It was just dark as they reached Eutaw Row, and ascended to the second floor, where Duke Gregory, still in his disguise as Jew Peddler, and with his pack upon his back, paused, as if dreading to enter.

At last he opened the door and entered.

The child was gone from its crib, and the door between was closed.

"She has recovered consciousness: you go first, mother," whispered the trembling man.

Clarice Bond obeyed; but no response came to her rap.

She repeated it louder, and still no answer.

"Open the door, mother."

She did so, and even from her lips came a cry, for she knew death well when she saw it, and it was before her.

There, upon the bed, side by side, the little one's head resting upon the mother's arm, lay Eva and her child.

By the bedside was a table, and upon it was a bottle and a piece of paper.

"Upon the bottle was labeled:

"Poison."

Upon the paper was written:

"God forgive this act of mine; but it is better so, for hope has fled forever from my heart."

"EVA RAYMOND GREGORY."

There was no reason for Clarice Bond to say a word.

Duke Gregory saw all as quickly as she did.

But not a word came from his lips, as he walked forward and stood with majestic mien and folded arms gazing down upon the mother and her child; his wife and child.

His disguise as a Jew Peddler was sunk in the silent majesty of his grief, and with alarm his mother gazed upon him, fearing the worst.

At last a step came upon the stair, and the mother hastened there.

It was Carl Carter, carrying a large trunk upon his shoulders.

In a word Clarice Bond told him all.

Putting the trunk down, he came into the room and gazed in silent awe at the beautiful dead and the grief-struck living.

Going nearer he said, softly:

"Come, captain, you go on board the yacht, and I will see to matters here."

"Found and lost," came in deep tones from the stricken man; but his eyes never left the dead face of his wife.

"Come, captain, for I must remove the body, before others come and it will be impossible; where are the keys of the box?"

Silently he took them from his pocket and handed them to him, and Carl hastened to the wood-box, fitted a key and unlocked it.

Then he took from the box the body and placed it in the trunk.

"Ask the captain to aid me with it on my shoulder; that will rouse him," whispered the young sailor.

The mother made the request, and instantly it was obeyed.

But at once, without a word Duke Gregory

returned to his steadfast gaze upon the faces of the dead.

Down the stairs with his heavy load went the young sailor, and once in the street hired a dray to carry it to the shore for him, from whence it was safely conveyed upon the Mischief, some suspecting the hideous secret the trunk held, concealed from mortal gaze.

Then back to Eutaw Row went Carl Carter, to find Duke Gregory still standing as he had left him, and the poor mother almost wild with anguish.

"Oh Carl! rouse him, or he will go raving mad," she cried.

"I am mad now, mother," was the deep, calm reply of the grief-haunted man, and bending over he passionately kissed the faces of the dead.

Then he turned and said, with a calmness that was painful to behold:

"Mother, I shall remain here with my dead until late to-night; then you and Mr. Carter come for me in a carriage, and I will carry them on board the yacht."

"Oh Duke, my son!"

"I mean it; I shall carry my dead with me. Come at midnight for us."

"Duke."

"Mother, I am in earnest"

She knew that words would be useless, and they turned away, followed by Carl Carter, and Duke Gregory was alone with his dead.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MAD CAPTAIN.

THE market bell had just tolled the hour of midnight, when a close carriage drove slowly up to the door of number 13 of the Eutaw Row.

The night had grown dark and stormy, and the rain poured in torrents, causing two persons who alighted from the hack to draw their cloaks close around them, as they entered the house.

The door was ajar, for in the house dwelt several families, and banged noiselessly, while swinging shutters, the patter of the rain and howling wind, drowned all other sounds.

Up the stairs the two muffled forms went and stopped at the door, which was locked.

Their rap, however, thrice repeated, caused a step to be heard within, and the door was opened by Duke Gregory, still in his disguise of the Jew peddler.

"You have come: what is the hour?" he said, calmly.

"After midnight," answered his mother.

"I am ready; I will carry my wife, you take my child."

He folded a heavy shawl all around the form of the dead wife, and raising her in his strong arms laid her head upon his shoulder and without a word left the room. Clarice followed with the child, also securely muffled up, and Carl brought up the rear with the peddler's pack.

"Leave the door unlocked; let their absence be a mystery that none here can solve," said Duke Gregory, turning on the stairs.

In silence Carl obeyed and followed.

Into the hack they got, the driver believing Eva to be an invalid, and the child asleep, and it rolled through the storm to the shore.

There a boat awaited, with Maddocks and two oarsmen.

"A bad night for a sick lady, sir," volunteered the driver, delighted at the liberal fee paid him by Carl.

"Yes, the worst night I ever knew," was the low reply of Carl Gregory, and it was a true one.

The hack rolled back into the town, the oars splashed in the water, and the boat moved toward the yacht.

The rough waves splattered them, as they broke over the bows, the rain still poured in torrents, and the wind swept by fiercely; but those in that little boat cared not for the elements, and they were unheeded.

At last the Mischief was reached, the dead forms of Eva and her child were borne into the cabin and laid upon sofas, and then came the stern orders from the master:

"Mr. Carter, get the anchor up and make sail."

All looked at him in surprise, and Clarice Bond said with remonstrance:

"Captain Duke, it is blowing a tornado out in the bay."

"Those who fear to sail to-night, may go ashore," was the stern response, in a tone that at once silenced remonstrance.

Going on deck Carl Carter ordered the sails reefed close, and then the anchor was hoisted, and the Mischief darted away down the bay with the speed of the wind.

In a little while, after getting well out into the bay, the fury of the gale was felt in its full force.

Then upon deck came Duke Gregory, no longer wearing his disguise, and gazed around him with apparent joy at the wild waters.

"Shake out those reefs!" he cried, in stentorian tones.

"She will not stand it, sir," said a seaman.

"What! do you dare utter a word when I command?" shouted the now thoroughly mad captain.

"I don't want to be drowned on account of a fool's recklessness," was the bold reply of the seaman.

"Hal! that's your humor is it, my man?" said the captain, with awful calmness.

"We are all that way of thinking too, I reckon."

"Come, lads, we know who he is, so let us save our lives and get the reward for his neck," yelled the mutineer seaman.

And in answer several of the crew, shipped by Maddocks, moved aft to join their leader.

Maddocks and Carl Carter sprung to the side of their captain; but there was no use of their support, for with the yell of a madman he rushed upon the leader, seized him in his powerful arms and hurled him into the sea, his terrified shriek rising above the howling winds and roaring waters.

In dismay his mutineer comrades fled forward and crouched down in trembling dread.

But Duke Gregory did not follow them, yet shouted in his trumpet tones:

"Shake out those reefs, I say!"

Quickly the frightened seamen sprung to obey, and, in spite of the fierce gale and wave-swept decks, the reefs were shaken out and the full sails spread to the furious winds.

Again at the helm, Duke Gregory held the bounding, reeling, plunging yacht on her course, while all on board gave themselves up for lost, and stood gazing in horror upon the madman.

Once Maddocks had moved forward, pistol in hand, as though to shoot him down and thus save the vessel; but he had felt a slight touch upon his arm, and turning had beheld Clarice Bond, who held a weapon in her hand also.

"Throw that pistol into the sea, sir."

Her tone was calm; but he saw her face by the glare of the sea, and obeyed with a muttered curse, just as a sudden swoop of the yacht hurled a seaman forward into the mad waters.

Mingling with his death-cry came a burst of demoniacal laughter from the madman, as he secured the vessel from her danger, and sent her again flying upon her fearful race with death.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT REST BENEATH THE SEA.

ALL through the remainder of that fearful night, the yacht went tearing on her course, the wild laughter of her mad helmsman rising above the shrieking winds, and those on board crouching down in terror at the fate that threatened them.

Once she had swept so near a huge vessel driving along under only storm-sails, that all believed she would dash into her and the suspense must end; but Duke Gregory swept her by almost at an oar's length, and hurled back a mocking laugh at the curses heaped upon him by those upon the large vessel.

Again, like the very wind, they sped by a wreck, and to the pitiful appeals of the crew for help, the madman answered with his wild laughter.

But, with the break of dawn, the wind suddenly lulled, and the seas beginning to run down, Duke Gregory left the helm to Maddocks, while he went into the cabin.

All that day the Mischief cruised listlessly about, Carl Carter and Clarice allowing no interference from the crew, and, as the sun went down, a dead calm fell upon the waters, and the moon, in its first quarter, hung in the eastern horizon, silvering the sails and rigging with its light.

Then out of the cabin came Duke Gregory and gazed in silence around him.

The sails hung listless, there was no ripple upon the waters, and the quietude upon the face of the deep could almost be felt.

In strange contrast to his wild humor of a few hours before, he said in a low, soft tone:

"Mother, Carl will get you some canvas, and will you kindly place my wife and child in their sea shroud?"

"Yes, my son," and the loving, unfortunate woman arose and descended to the cabin, accompanied by Carl Carter.

To and fro, to and fro, paced the grief-maddened man, until at last the mother came on deck and said softly:

"It is done, my son; the child rests on its mother's breast."

"Thank you mother," was the low reply.

"Would you have a last look at them?"

"No, I have bidden them farewell forever, mother; let Carl and Maddocks bring them on deck."

It was done, and the white, canvas-shrouded forms were laid at the feet of the husband and father.

"Those irons that I wore, place at Eva's feet, for they are fitting to drag her down to the ocean depths," he said bitterly, yet calmly:

The heavy chains and manacles were then made fast to the feet of the shrouded form, and Carl, taking his cap off, said quietly:

"All ready for burial, Captain Duke."

The man stepped forward, and bending over raised without a seeming effort the dead in his arms, and bore them to the vessel's side.

Without a word he threw the canvas-shrouded forms into the calm waters, and leaning over watched the white sail that enveloped his dead, until lost to sight in the dark depths below.

Then turning he said with a calmness that surprised all, for they had expected an outbreak:

"Mr. Carter, when the wind springs up head for Baltimore, please."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the ready reply aloud.

But in a muttered tone the young sailor said:

"What strange fatality causes him to go back there, the scene where he has known so much of woe?"

But, with the rising breeze the yacht's head was turned back to Baltimore, and in the early dawn she swept once more past the Arrow and Dolphin to her secluded anchorage above.

Hardly had the anchor been let fall when Duke Gregory came out of the cabin, again in his disguise of a Jew peddler, and saying that he would return by night, went on shore.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MISCHIEF GOES ON A CRUISE.

TRUE to his promise, by sunset a shore-boat came off to the yacht, bringing in it the supposed Jew peddler.

Once in the cabin of the yacht, and Duke Gregory summoned Carl Carter and Maddocks.

"Mr. Maddocks, I believe you are well acquainted in this port?" he said, after waving the sailor to a seat with something of his old courtesy of manner.

"Yes, sir, I know it well."

"Then I will give you a duty to perform, sir."

"I have taken a fancy to go cruising in a larger vessel, and I have my eye upon it; but it went into the dock to-day for a thorough overhauling, and it will take some weeks before she is again ready for sea."

"In the mean time I wish you to go ashore, get you a good boarding-place, and ship me a crew."

"I will furnish you with ample means, and I am so particular in my desire for a crew, I want no man who is afraid to die if the necessity demands it."

"Ay, ay, sir; but what wages?"

"Ah, yes; well, tell them that they shall each one share the same pay the captain receives."

"I do not exactly understand, Captain Duke."

"Simply, if I make a few hundreds in a day, each man on board will do the same; if I make nothing, their share is the same."

"I think I understand, sir; the booty is to be divided equally?"

"Yes, and hard knocks, hardships, wounds and death as well."

"Yes, sir."

"I will want one hundred men."

"A large number, sir."

"I will need them."

"And within a few weeks?"

"Yes, get them board at different places, and pay it for them yourself; but remember, I want the strictest secrecy."

"I will be cautious, sir."

"Be careful not to ship a traitor."

"I shall know my men, sir."

"Well, do your work well, and you shall be next to Carter in rank on my vessel."

"Thank you, sir. Will you need a third officer?"

"No, for I shall take the night watches and let Carter and yourself divide them by day; I shall need work, Maddocks, to keep me calm."

"Yes, sir."

"Now here is your money, and you will find it ample for the purpose."

"Indeed it is, sir," said Maddocks, glancing with surprise at the generous amount.

"But can you spare this much, when you have a vessel to buy?"

"The price I pay for the craft, Maddocks, will not be in gold," was the significant reply; but the man understood it fully, and smiled grimly.

"And you go on a cruise, you say, sir?"

"Yes, to the northward; I leave at once, but will return in time."

"Now have Carter put you ashore, and success attend you."

Maddocks went to his bunk and prepared for his trip, and soon after stood on *terra firma*.

Watching the yacht he saw her spread her white sails and fly down the harbor, passing close to the Dolphin, as if in very bravado, and then he muttered:

"The man is mad, that is certain; but there is method in his madness, and I shall cling to his fortunes, come what may."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WEAK AND WICKED.

BACK to the coast of old Massachusetts, I carry my reader, and to the green hills, pleasant valleys, and spreading fields around the grand mansion of the Gregorys.

It is night, and a moon, near its full, rides in the heavens, with only a skurrying cloud now and then shutting off its radiant light.

Upon the piazza of the hall paces a woman to and fro.

She is dressed in deep black, and a train rustles along after her as she walks.

Her face is beautiful, but proud, her eyes large and full of fire, and yet cold in their regard.

Now and then she pauses by some column, and with her hands clasped in front of her, and hanging down listlessly, gazes upon the moonlit landscape for awhile, as if drinking in its beauties, and then out upon the ocean, which throws its surf with monotonous war upon the rocky shores.

As she stands there in the moonlight, her eyes fall upon a sail rounding a distant point of land, and heading toward the inlet used as a fishing harbor, and haven for the boats of the mansion.

She watches the craft until it runs in, luffs up and drops anchor, and then drawing her sable mantle around her exquisite form, turns and enters the house.

As the hall lamp falls upon her the beautiful face of Grace Townsend is revealed—she that was Grace Gregory.

Entering the parlors she seats herself by the harp and runs her fingers over the strings for a few minutes, to then break forth in song.

But breaking off suddenly, she rises impatiently, and going into the spacious library, takes a book and begins to read.

But it does not interest her, and it is thrown aside for a piece of embroidery she has been engaged in at odd times.

This, too, she tosses aside, and rising, says petulantly:

"I am strangely out of sorts to-night: and I should not be, for I have all that I could wish at my command."

"I am not exactly well, I fear, so I will retire, and see if I cannot forget myself in sleep."

She touched a bell and a servant appeared:

"Burton, close the house, for I am going to bed, and send Sophie to me."

Sophie, the maid, soon appeared, and Grace ascended to her elegant sleeping room, which was in the sea wing of the mansion, for since that night which had so nearly proven fatal to her, she had never slept in her old room.

But instead of retiring, seized with another humor, she dismissed her maid, telling her she

would undress herself, and sat down to write some letters.

"This old place is too lonely, and I'll have several of my old school friends to visit me."

"It has been nearly four months since Judge Townsend's death, and I am not going to mope my life away in widow's weeds, just to please this world."

"No, no, I will rule men, and women too; I have the money, and gold is king, so what need care I for the gossips."

"I will be happy; I will let the dead past bury its dead, and live wholly for the present."

"I know my power and I will use it."

"Ah, me! I would feel better satisfied if I knew what had become of that *man*."

"He escaped, and, in spite of the reward he has not been taken."

"I verily believe the Government winked at his escape, if it did not aid and abet it; for his past career had been so brilliant they cared not to have to hang an officer of their service."

"I wonder where he is, and if he will return to piracy."

"The mysterious disappearance of his wife and child, which I read in a paper sent me from Baltimore yesterday, seems to point to his having spirited them away; but it is strange that they left their rooms undisturbed."

"But I need have no fear, for he'll never cross my path again, and I'll have my friends visit me and make this old mansion ring with merriment."

"They say I am cold; I will show them that I am heartless, and bright faces will drive a way the blues, and phantoms can troop about only in the darkness."

She drew her paper toward her and wrote several letters to some of her old school friends to come and visit her, ending each letter pretty much in this strain:

"You know how I have suffered in the past, from an act of my father's when he was a wild young man, and the ignominy heaped upon his son, my poor, unfortunate half-brother?"

"You also know that my husband died a cruel death, and that I am left to mourn."

"But now that months have passed away, I feel, and my physicians say, that I must have a change."

"The cares of my vast estate prevent me from leaving home, so I beg you to come to me for a few weeks, yes, months if you will."

"There will be, I hope, several of our old chums at Madame Marie's, and with archery, horses, to ride and drive, boating, and sketching the beautiful scenery by day, and music and chats in the evenings, not to forget an occasional beau, we can pass the time contentedly, if not merrily."

"I will not take no for an answer, so come to me, *ma chere*."

Such was the style of half a dozen letters she wrote, sealed and addressed to their respective destinations.

Glancing up at the clock in her room, she said quickly:

"What! twelve o'clock? I have indeed managed to kill several hours."

She started to rise, but suddenly sunk back in her chair.

She was powerless to move, and no cry burst from her lips, while her eyes stared wildly before her.

And no wonder; for, in her room was another personage than herself.

A man stood within ten feet of her, and, with folded arms was calmly gazing upon her.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NEMESIS.

"WELL, madam, the cares of widowhood rest lightly upon your fair shoulders."

The words came in calm, sneering tones, and the speaker was a tall, heavily-bearded man, his beard giving him the look of a Spaniard, for they were not worn by Americans in that day.

He had a slouch hat upon his head, a military cloak around his shoulders, and was dressed in black.

"Who are you, sir, that dares intrude upon my privacy?" she asked, with an effort regaining her presence of mind.

"An unwelcome visitor, as you will admit, Madame Townsend, ere I take my departure," was the bold reply.

"Leave this room and house, sir, at once, or I will call my servants," and she arose to her feet, yet dare not trust her limbs to walk across the chamber.

He smiled at her words, and said:

"Your servants are all asleep, and your maid is unconscious from a drug I administered to her."

Back into her chair sunk the woman, and her face became pallid as that of a corpse.

"In God's name why have you come here?" she gasped forth.

"For retribution for a wrong," was the stern response.

"How have I wronged you?"

"In many ways."

"We never met before."

"You are mistaken."

"Oh, tell me who you are?"

He slowly raised his hand to his head, and removed his hat, and with it a wig he wore.

Then came the beard, and as the cloak dropped to the floor, the tall form and white, stern face of Duke Gregory were revealed to the gaze of the horrified woman.

"Oh God have mercy!" she groaned.

He made no reply for an instant, and then said in his low, deep tones:

"Had there been one atom of mercy in your soul, Grace Gregory, I would not be now the outcast, murderer, and hunted man I am."

"And as such I will have you arrested; ay, I will go to Washington to see that you do not escape, and stand by when they put the rope around your neck to hang you for your crimes," she cried, with savage vehemence.

He laughed, a low, sneering, mocking laugh, and went on as before:

"Had there been one atom of mercy in your cold heart, Grace Townsend, my wife and child would not now lie at the bottom of the sea."

"They are dead then?" sneered the woman.

"Yes."

"The shock of knowing whom she had married doubtless killed the woman."

"No."

"What then?"

"She died by her own hand."

"Ah! suicide seems to be a failing in that family; her father suicided I believe?"

"He did."

"And the child?"

"Its mother killed it."

"A murderess as well as suicide?"

"Yes."

"A fitting wife for such a husband; what a pity she killed herself."

Words cannot portray the deep, wicked satire of the woman, who spoke without seeming to feel that she was throwing powder upon a blazing furnace.

Had she looked the man squarely in the eyes, she would have seen there that which would have made her heart tremble with fear.

"You, not poor Eva, are responsible for her act and our child's death."

"Me! why how am I guilty?" and she arched her beautiful brows.

"When you knew the secret of my birth, you could have kept it a secret, and prevented Neil Gregory from making it known."

"I had ever loved you, Grace; ever been a true brother to you."

"In the olden time when we were children together, I yielded to you in everything; and when you grew up to girlhood I was proud of my beautiful sister."

"When away at sea I wrote you kind brotherly letters; I sent you souvenirs of foreign lands, and felt so proud when I knew how you would feel when I won distinction and fame."

"I came back to find you turn from me with scorn; to be ordered from the home I believed my own by one whom you hated and yet had married."

"Not one kind word from you, only scorn and hatred."

"It was not I that attempted your life; and only when I heard that you were dead did I commit my first crime in taking Leroy Townsend to sea with me and hanging him, with the belief that with his death, my secret would remain buried."

"Alas! how was I mistaken!"

"And now what am I?"

"A hunted man, dishonored, nameless, an outlaw and accursed on the face of God's earth."

"But having fallen, Grace Gregory, I have fallen so low that I am determined to seek revenge upon you."

"Yes, you shall not live here in your pride and wealth, you who could have saved me, and yet goaded the bloodhounds on after me; no, you shall not live here in happiness, for you can be happy as you have no heart, while I am an outcast and a wanderer."

"With this determination in my heart I have come here this night."

She had listened to him without a word or movement.

Not a quickened breath, or quiver of the lips had shown that she was touched by his recalling their past in the happy time of youth.

No, her heart was callous, and he saw it, and said:

"Had you, Grace Gregory, as I knew you, shown one atom of heart or soul, one tiny mite of pity or regret, I might have been tempted to spare you."

"But now, merciless as you have been, that merciless will I now be."

"In God's name, Duke Gregory, what would you do?" she cried, now thoroughly terrified.

"Kill you, as I would a viper that had stung me," he hissed, through his shut teeth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FATAL DRAUGHT.

"DUKE GREGORY are you mad?" cried the woman, now in the utmost alarm.

"You have said it, madam; I am mad, and hence I am not responsible for my acts."

"You were sane, and you were responsible for your deeds, and they were more damnable than mine."

"I killed the body; you killed the soul, for I am utterly and forever lost."

"Grace Gregory, you have just ten minutes to make your peace with God."

He took from his pocket a watch and calmly looked at its face.

But instead of prayer, the woman determined upon flight, and suddenly made a bound for the door, at the same time crying aloud:

"Help! Sophie! Burton! help!"

With mocking laughter he sprung forward, seized her in his arms, and hissed forth:

"Woman, you shall not escape me; you call in vain for help."

"Here, I give you your choice of death, for I care not to stain my knife with your life-blood."

He took from his pocket as he spoke a small vial, still holding her firmly in his grasp, while she gazed with wild eyes into his face.

"Here, this will cause death within one minute's time, and is painless. 'You can follow the example of my poor wife and take it yourself; or you can die by my knife.'

"Which shall it be, Grace?"

He spoke with the utmost calmness, and she knew that he meant what he said.

"Duke, for the love of God! spare me!"

"No!"

"Remember, Duke, I nearly died once from the powers of that fearful herb, and oh! it was fearful as my life hung between life and death."

"What care I?"

"I am young, Duke; beautiful, and life's pleasures all before me."

"And life's pain a hell on earth to me now, woman."

"Duke! Brother—"

"Hold! breathe not that sacred word, for from your lips, Grace Gregory, it is desecration."

"I will give you my riches, my all, if you will only spare my life."

"You value it high, for I know what you are worth."

"Yet all will I give to you, Duke, if you will spare me."

"I will not."

"Not for my entire wealth?"

"Your riches will not buy back my honor."

"They will enable you to go to another land, where you are unknown, and live in luxury."

"You plead in vain; there is no joy for me in life."

"You have your choice; which shall it be, the knife or the poison?"

"Neither, oh no! no! no!"

"It shall be one."

"Spare me!"

"Never!"

"By the past you spoke of to-night! by the days of our childhood! by your love for me then, spare me!"

"I say no, once for all."

"Here is the poison, and there the knife; which shall it be?"

She shuddered and turned her face away from both; but she saw that he was merciless, and stretched out her hand for the poison.

Silently he handed it to her.

Her whole frame trembled as she took it, and her heart fluttered violently.

"It is painless, you say?" she asked in a husky voice.

"Yes."

"Oh! I cannot take it," she cried in heart-rending accents.

Silently he raised his knife above her bosom.

She glanced up at the gleaming blade, then into his eyes, and quickly placed the vial to her lips.

"I have done it," she said, with strange calmness.

"Yes."

"Now your revenge is complete, for you have killed me."

"Your own hand carried the draught to your lips."

"But you forced me to do so; yes, you are my murderer; but you shall not have the joy to stay here and see me die."

"Go, sir; I command you!"

She drew herself up and pointed to the door. But he did not move.

With his eyes fastened upon her, he said sternly:

"Grace Gregory, I have made you feel all the pangs of death, and in that I rejoice, for my revenge has been in seeing you suffer."

"Now I tell you that what I gave you was not poison."

"Not poison! God in heaven, I thank Thee!" she almost shrieked, and reeling with the revulsion of feeling, she sunk into her chair.

"No, the mixture was harmless, and you will live."

"Good, noble Duke."

"Silence! I want no thanks from you, for I let you live to, living, suffer."

"I wish you to see what your acts have made me."

"And, if you can rest at night, and remorse not gnaw at your soul, then your heart is of brass, and naught earthly can move you."

"Grace Gregory, I am no longer myself; my brain is crazed, and when henceforth, living in your luxury, and enjoying life amid your friends, you hear of the Mad Mariner, know that the same blood flows in his veins as in your own; know that it is Duke Gregory, and you made him what he becomes."

He turned quickly, and without another word left the room and the house, departing in the same secret and mysterious way in which he had entered, and Grace Townsend, the beautiful widow, was alone with her own thoughts.

Alone, and still fearing that he was deceiving her, and that the draught he had given her was indeed poison, and would kill her.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE JEW AND THE SAILOR.

AFTER leaving Hillside Hall, where he left Grace in such an agony of suspense and trepidation, Duke Gregory walked rapidly back to the highway, and traversing it for some distance, turned into the path leading to the home of Clarice Bond.

A light glimmered in one window, and a rap at the door brought to it Nannie, the wife of Carl Carter.

"They are in the back room, sir, at supper," she said, ushering him into the house.

At the table sat Clarice Bond and Carl, and there were two other places laid.

One of these Duke Gregory took, and the other was re-occupied by Nannie.

"I have just been telling Nannie, Duke, that this is her home, and I give her a paper to-night to that effect."

"You are right, mother; the cabin is not a pleasant place for her to dwell, and I am glad you made her come up here."

"You see, Duke, all the people round here think that Carl is off on a whaling voyage, and they are very kind to Nannie, and she can be most comfortable here, and it is her home, for if I am a fugitive myself, I owe no man anything, and can do with my own as I please."

"You are more than kind, Mrs. Bond, and Nannie's brother will come up from the cabin in the glen and live with her, and she'll be most happy until my return," said Carl.

And thus they chatted for one hour, until the time to depart came round, and then farewells were spoken, and the young wife and her child were left alone.

Walking on together, while Carl lingered for a last farewell, Clarice Bond said sadly:

"Do you know, Duke, I feel as if I would not live long."

"Nonsense, mother: you are blue at coming back to the old house," he replied.

"No, I am not more so than at other times;

the feeling is in my heart, that soon you will be alone in the world."

"Then I wish you would remain here in your old home, and I pledge you that Grace shall never disturb you."

"No, I should go mad to remain here; see, am I not in man's attire? Have I not cast off all ties of womanhood?"

"No, I follow you, for good or evil, until one of our lives shall end."

He said nothing, but held out his hand and she grasped it warmly, and then walked on in silence to the shore, where Carl, a moment after joined them.

They beheld the *Mischief*, which was lying only a short distance off, held only by a kedge, and with her sails up, and a boat came ashore and carried them on board.

"Now, Whenton," said Duke, addressing the man who was serving in the place of Mad-docks:

"Back to Baltimore we go."

And back to Baltimore the swift craft ran with all speed, and swept up the bay to her old anchorage, having to pass not only the Dolphin, but several other vessels-of-war in so doing.

"I do not see the *Arrow*," said Carl Carter, who was closely eying the vessels in port.

"I do; she is over yonder at the dock repairing," was Duke Gregory's quiet response, and having removed his disguise as a peddler once more, he rowed ashore.

As he stepped out of the boat, he was met by a woman who said quietly:

"Say, old hulk of the tribe of Israel, come to my room with me and I'll trade with you, for I need some little things."

"He'll cheat you out of your eye-teeth, messmate," put in a sailor near.

"No, mine fri'nts, I never cheat nobodys, so help me Moses; yes, mine goot sailor-mans I goes mit you right straight off."

"Then come along, for I have no time to parlez-vous, or Dutch either with you."

The pretended Jew at once swung his pack on his back and followed the seaman, who led him to a boarding-house near.

Up to his room he went, and closing the door, said:

"Welcome back, captain; I saw the *Mischief* run in and was just about to go out to her, when I saw you coming ashore."

"I am glad to meet you again, Maddocks; what luck?" answered Duke Gregory.

"I made up the even hundred, sir, this morning, and they are a fine set of men."

"Who will ask no questions?"

"None, sir."

"They suspect not the service they are wanted for?"

"I told them hot work, rich pay, and death at the guns with them at all times as a shipmate."

"And they shipped readily?"

"I had my pick out of hundreds, captain."

"You have done well, Maddocks."

"Thank you, sir; now let me ask you if you have any objections to strike the Government for a craft?"

"Why?"

"The *Arrow* has just come off the stocks to-day."

"Yes."

"She is fully refitted; has had a new bottom put on her, and they are now putting stores in her for a three years' cruise, I hear."

"She is the very craft I have my eye on, Maddocks."

"I am glad to hear it, sir, for I feared it was a schooner up in the yard."

"No, it is the *Arrow*; when will she be provisioned?"

"By to-morrow."

"Good! now I will get some extra stores and arms on the *Mischief* and have Carter run her down the bay, and wait for us in the *Arrow*."

"They are shipping men for the *Arrow* now, sir, and sending them on the Dolphin to drill."

"When does she drop down to an anchorage, Maddocks?"

"To-morrow night, sir, I hear."

"What force is on her?"

"A middy and twelve seamen, and a sergeant and four marines."

"Ah! we must take her where she now lies, Maddocks."

"It will be a bold game to play, sir."

"It must be done; when can you get your men?"

"All of them within an hour's notice, sir."

"Then hold them all in readiness for to-morrow night; get half a dozen boats to carry them in, and row out to the yacht just after dark."

"In the mean time here is a list of purchases I wish made, and have them sent on board the *Mischief* as soon as possible."

"I will, sir."

"I will now go round to where the *Arrow* lies, and go on board, under pretense of selling some articles to the seamen, which will give me a chance to reconnoiter."

"A good idea, sir."

"And if I form any other plan that is better, I will let you know."

So saying, Duke Gregory left the sailor tavern, and at the shuffling gait he had assumed, wended his way along the docks, in the direction of the spot where the schooner-of-war *Arrow* was anchored.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RECONNOITERING THE ENEMY.

LIEUTENANT ARTHUR NEVIL was pacing the deck of the *Arrow*, engaged in the enjoyment of a cigar and admiration of the schooner since it had been overhauled, refitted and rearmed.

He felt a little miffed at his not being placed in full command on her expected cruise, as a captain and full crew was to be put on her from the frigate now in port; but then he had been promoted from passed midshipman to lieutenant, and that certainly was honor enough for one of his years, for every one could not expect to be a Duke Gregory for luck.

Presently the boat sent ashore for stores returned, and the boatswain came aft, and said:

"There's a Jew peddler, sir, I brought out, as he had some nice things I thought the lads might wish; I hope I hasn't done wrong, sir?"

"No, be'sen, for I wish some little articles myself, and will be too busy to run up-town for them; send him to the cabin first."

The lieutenant went into the cabin, and soon the boatswain came in with his Jew peddler, who bowed and scraped with marked politeness, at the same time looking around him with curiosity, as though he had never been on ship-board before.

Lieutenant Nevil could not refrain from smiling at the quaint figure cut by the Jew, and asked:

"Well, my Hebrew friend, you have never been on shipboard before?"

"Yesh, I ish, mine fri'nt; but I hash goots and t'ings vat you vants."

"Let me see your goods, for you are all business, I observe."

"Yes, mine fri'nt, I ish all pizzinesh, to pe sure."

The goods were displayed, the officer made several purchases, and during the transaction the Jew said:

"Yesh, I hash peen on ships pefore; I ish have a fri'nt vat ish deat now, dat vash a loot'nent on a vessel, t'e *Arrow*."

"Why, this is the *Arrow*."

"Mine Got in Himmel, no!"

"Yes; who was your friend?"

"I lives near him in Massachoost, and his name vash Duke Gregory, mine fri'nt."

"Duke Gregory! indeed! why he was once the commander of this vessel; but he was found to be a low-born wretch, a murderer and all that was bad, and he only escaped hanging for his crimes by managing to escape on the way to the gallows."

"Your friend Gregory, my Hebrew gentleman, I would not mention if I were you, for it is no credit for any one to know such a vile creature."

"Ish dat so?" was the calm reply, of the pretended Jew.

"Yes, it is so."

"Ish t'e gentlemanish deat now?"

"No; he has gone pirating, I guess; it is just what he ought to do, to in the end be strung up."

"Ish dat so?" again said the unmoved trader in nick-nacks.

"Vell, I t'anks you, mine fri'nt. I is have a petter class of goods I vill pring you to-morrow, and—"

"No, we will be too busy to-morrow, for we get under way after sunset, and after luffing up for our crew from the frigate, will sail on our cruise."

"Ah! dat ish pad for me; vell, mine fri'nt, I pids you farewell."

The pretended Jew then took his departure, and, after half an hour spent among the few

men on board, who purchased liberally from him, he took leave of the ship, having made a most thorough examination of the vessel, her men, and the possibilities of cutting her out by a bold maneuver.

Leaving the schooner *Duke Gregory* returned on board the *Mischief* and made known his plans to his mother and Carl Carter, and for the rest of the day and night, and the following morning, all was quiet preparation for the daring deed contemplated.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A PROPHECY FULFILLED.

LIEUTENANT ARTHUR NEVIL was about to give the order to set sail on the schooner, for the anchor was slowly leaving the bottom, under the pressure of the windlass, when a boat came alongside, containing a young middy and half a dozen seamen.

"Lieutenant Nevil, I believe, sir?" and the middy politely raised his cap.

"Yes, sir."

"I am from the frigate *America*, sir, and Captain Delorme, who is to command the *Arrow*, begs me to say that he will join you at your anchorage here, so as to keep directly on down the bay, the Chesapeake Pirate having been reported below doing considerable damage."

"Thank you, sir; I will await the captain here; forward there! leave that anchor where it is; do you sail on the schooner?"

"Yes, sir, I have that honor."

"Your name, please."

"Gregory Bond, sir."

"Your Christian name has been a rather unfortunate one in our service of late."

"You refer to poor Captain Duke Gregory, sir?"

"Yes, but don't *poor* him; he is unworthy a thought of pity in an honest mind. How long before the captain and his men come?"

"I expect them any moment, sir," and the midshipman glanced out over the dark waters toward the distant anchorage of vessels, and then said quietly:

"They are coming now, sir; the boats are just visible crossing the harbor."

"Ah yes, I see them; forward there!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Get that anchor up; and, sergeant!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the Marine Sergeant addressed.

"Get your men to the gangway to receive your captain."

"Mr. Bond, as you are to serve with us, please have the crew, not at the capstan, set sail; you see I am very short in men, those I have with me being only a guard as it were for the schooner."

The midshipman saluted, and ordered the men who were not busy with the anchor to unfurl the sails and get all ready to set at a moment's notice, and there was that about his manner and orders that caused an old salt to remark to a shipmate *sotto voce*:

"Guess he's fresh from the shore, messmate; but he'll l'arn suthin' afore the cruise is over."

"I reckon," was the significant response, in the same low tone.

With his marines ready at the gangway, Lieutenant Arthur Nevil, having hastily donned his full uniform, stepped to the side at which the boats were expected, and stood awaiting Captain Delorme, whom he had met several days before, he having been the First Luff of the frigate *America*, promoted to a captaincy to take command of the *Arrow*.

The boats, according to the laws of discipline were hailed with:

"Boats ahoy! what boats are those?"

"From the United States frigate *America*," came the response.

"Ay, ay; come alongside."

The boats, which had rested on their oars during the hail and response again moved forward, and the larger one touched the gangway, while one went forward of it, another astern, and two more around the bows and stern of the schooner.

Then out of them swarmed scores of dark forms, and ere Arthur Nevil could start back with surprise, he had a pistol to his head, and a low stern voice said:

"Lieutenant Nevil, you are my prisoner, and I resume command of my own schooner."

"Good God! Duke Gregory!"

"Yes, I am Duke Gregory the disowned, the outlaw, and whatever else you may seem fit to call him."

"Then by Heaven, you die!"

The plucky officer at once drew a pistol from his breast, and springing back fired.

With the report there was a heavy fall upon the deck; but through the puff of smoke bounded a tall form, and seizing the Lieutenant Nevil in his arms he hurled him over the bulwarks into the sea, while he cried in stern, suppressed tones:

"Do not hurt a man of them, lads, but hurl them overboard."

The speaker was Duke Gregory, and he was towering with passion, and quickly his orders were obeyed until not one of the schooner's crew remained on board.

"Now up with those sails, lively, lads!"

"Mr. Maddocks, take the helm, please; boat-swain, set everything that will draw, and lose no time, for even in this lonely anchorage that shot, and the cries of those men will attract attention."

Rapidly had Duke Gregory, no longer in disguise, issued his orders, and with promptness they were obeyed by the crew, and the schooner swung free from the bottom, and began to feel the pressure of the ten-knot breeze that was blowing upon her sails.

Springing to the side of the one who had fallen at the shot of Arthur Nevil, to his horror Duke Gregory beheld the one who had come ahead as the pretended midshipman from the America.

It was Clarice Bond, his mother, and she was dying.

"I told you that my time was coming, my son; but don't mind me, but look after your schooner," she said, faintly.

With a cry of rage, he drew a pistol from his breast and sprung upon the bulwark.

All knew his intention: it was to kill the one who had shot down his mother.

But the schooner had forged ahead of the boats and out from among the swimming sailors.

A glance showed him that they were climbing into the largest of the boats set adrift by his men upon reaching the schooner.

Instantly he ran to the helm, and seizing it from the hands of Maddocks, he cried in trumpet tones:

"Ready about!"

What could his strange order mean?

The schooner was dashing swiftly along on her course down the harbor, and yet her daring commander was putting about.

All looked dumb with amazement, until his ringing tones made them spring to their posts.

And about the schooner went, as on a pivot, and stood away on a course almost in the opposite direction from which she had been going.

And on this she rushed like the wind until the docks loomed up dead ahead.

Then came again the order in clarion tones:

"Ready about!"

Once more the graceful and thoroughly working schooner went round, and then getting the full impetus of the strong breeze, which was blowing almost half a gale, rushed forward like a race-horse, with everything set that would draw.

Then the crew saw what their daring chief intended.

He was heading directly for the large boat, in which he knew was Arthur Nevil.

Those in the boat seemed to understand, too, their danger, and pulled hard for the shore.

But the Arrow's bows were pointed straight for them.

"Way 'nough!"

"Back water!"

"Pull for your lives!"

Such were the rapid orders issued by Arthur Nevil, in a vain endeavor to clear from the schooner's course.

But all was useless, for the razor-like bows struck the boats with a tremendous crash, cutting it in two, and passed on like the wind, while a burst of mocking laughter rung in the ears of those who had not been killed and wounded by the terrific shock.

"Mother, I hope you are avenged," cried Duke Gregory, leaving the wheel to Maddocks, and again kneeling by the side of his mother.

But no answer came.

The ears had not heard the crashing of the boat; the tongue could utter no word, and the eyes were staring, yet saw not, for Death's seal was upon the heart of the unfortunate woman, and her wrongs were ended, her sorrows over, and the pulse forever silent.

A groan of anguish broke from the lips of

Duke Gregory, for the devotion of his mother to him had won his idolatrous worship, and he loved her the stronger, for having found so late in life a mother to love, even though she had been weak and wicked.

If she had sinned at first, she had not known it, and sinning afterward, it was all for him.

With a violent effort he controlled his emotion, and called out in his trumpet tones:

"Go to your guns, men!"

Instantly they obeyed.

"Prepare for action!"

He knew the schooner well, and his directions to get ammunition and arms were quickly carried out, and before the Arrow had gone a mile he had his crew ready for action.

"Now, Maddocks, my flag!"

At this order Maddocks fastened to the hal-yard a sable roll, and stood ready to run it up to the peak at an order from his leader.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MAD MARINER.

"At the guns, then!" shouted Duke Gregory in stern tones that reached every part of the deck.

"Ay, ay, sir," came a deep response in chorus from the crew.

"Load your guns with blank cartridges to salute your colors!"

"Ay, ay, sir, all ready."

The Arrow was now within a quarter of a mile of the group of vessels of war, which were five in number.

It was evident that her approach was seen; for she was expected, but under a far different captain and crew, and all were anxious to see the craft that had been captured from Captain Cloud the pirate, and which had led such an eventful career, and was now in such splendid condition for another cruise.

Her captain and crew on the frigate were all ready to board her when she should luff up and anchor, and she was sighted coming down under full sail, with a cheer of admiration at her tremendous speed.

Nearer and nearer she came, her low, black hull hardly visible, and her fields of canvas looking like a huge white cloud sweeping over the dark waters.

"Ready there!" came the stern tone of the chief.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Burn the blue-light!"

"Run up the flag!"

"Salute your colors, ye pets of Satan!"

The wild, ringing command of the mad chief was heard on the vessel of war with dumb amazement.

But suddenly the blue-lights made the flying schooner seem on fire, and up to the peak, instead of the expected stars and stripes, went a huge sable field.

And the design in its center?

That riveted every eye, and sent a thrill of horror through every heart.

A gallows with a white skeleton suspended by a red rope, and upon the bony wrists and ankles red manacles and chains.

Such were the hideous emblems relieved against the sable folds.

So struck dumb with amazement were all the officers of the vessels of war, believing it at first some hideous joke, that not until the thunder of the guns died away did they move or utter a word.

All saw the schooner as plain as day, for she was running in within a cable's length of the line of armed vessels, and they saw her crew at her guns, stripped to the waist, and in the glare of the blue-lights looking like demons, as the smoke wafted over them.

What meant this large force upon the schooner, when her crew was yet on the frigate? What meant this strange action on the part of Arthur Nevil?

The questions were upon every lip.

And they were suddenly answered by a tall form springing into the rigging.

It was clad in a full uniform of black, trimmed with silver lace, and wearing silver epaulettes. And many on the Dolphin recognized that white, haggard face.

But if they had been in doubt, his wild words, shouted forth in trumpet tones, would have told them who he was.

"Ho, the Dolphin!"

"Would you retake your prisoner, Duke Gregory, the Disowned, seek on blue water the Mad Mariner!"

A wild yell burst from the crews of the vessels-of-war.

Orders were given with wonderful rapidity, and each craft was a scene of excited confusion.

But the Mad Mariner, as he had named himself, sprung back upon his deck, more sail was crowded on, and before the Dolphin, in swinging round, could send a shot after the flying craft, it was nearly a mile away.

And, going like the very wind, ere the anchors were gotten up, the sails spread, and the entire fleet in full chase, the beautiful schooner had placed over a league between her and her pursuers, and was rushing down Chesapeake Bay at a pace that seemed to defy her foes.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CHASE OF THE DISOWNED.

WHEN the morning dawned, the fugitive craft was some four miles in advance of the swiftest of the vessels in pursuit, which was the Dolphin, hovering just in the wake of the sloop.

Running along easily, with all set that would draw, the captured vessel, which her daring commander had re-christened *The Disowned*, seemed to feel no dread of her pursuers, while her crew gazed upon their mad leader with awe and respect.

That he was mad, they knew full well, and that he had method in his madness they had already seen.

Realizing how he had trusted them, to without a word flaunt his hideous ensign in the faces of the American fleet, though he could not have felt assured of their being true to him under such circumstances, they were forced to respect his indomitable pluck, while there was that in the daring man that commanded their sympathy and esteem.

As soon as *The Disowned* was fairly free from her foes, Duke Gregory had raised the form of his mother in his arms and borne it into the cabin.

There he had himself sewn it in a canvas shroud, and attaching heavy cannon balls to the feet had again carried the form on deck.

"Lay to, Mr. Maddocks," he said calmly.

The officer looked his surprise, but said nothing, for he dare not remonstrate, although the fleet was hardly a league away.

He quickly gave the necessary orders, and the tiny schooner swept up into the wind, and lay with her sharp bow to the breeze.

"It may be mockery, Maddocks, for words of prayer to come from my lips; but I intend to recite the burial service over my poor mother."

"With my wife and child it was different, for they had never sinned, and left the world as pure as they came into it."

"But my mother did sin, and her sins were for me, and that the Father above will forget and forgive I humbly pray."

Maddocks made no reply, but was deeply touched by the words and manner of the man, and himself made all the arrangements for the burial.

A board was brought and the body placed upon it, the inner end of which rested upon the shoulders of two gunners; the outer end was upon the starboard bulwark.

Then, standing near, in a deep, impressive voice and earnest manner, Duke Gregory went through the beautiful service of the Church of England for the dead.

The schooner rocked wildly upon the waves, the winds howled a requiem through the rigging, the waves moaned in sympathy, while the crew stood around with uncovered heads.

Flying down upon the little vessel came the fleet, evidently believing some accident had caused the daring commander to decide to strike his hideous flag.

But had they beheld the scene enacted upon the deck of *The Disowned*, even the grim gunners would have refrained from firing upon the fugitive craft, for the sight was enough to touch an iron heart, as a dishonored, disowned son, an outcast and hunted man, one who had raised the flag of the pirate above his decks, was reciting the service of the dead above the body of his poor, unfortunate mother.

It had been whispered around already who the dead, clad in male attire, was, and the crew were touched with sympathy, and many a voice, as the last words were uttered, breathed from lips that were stained with profanity, a fervent:

"Amen!"

And into the wild waters sunk the form of Clarice Bond, the poor woman whose life a man had wrecked, and who, more sinned

against than sinning, had had her life so warped from good, that her very love made her turn to evil.

Hot and fast, as the body sunk beneath the waves, rained the iron hail around the schooner, from her savage pursuers, which, crowded from deck to truck with canvas, were coming on at a fearful pace under the pressure of the half gale that was blowing.

"Get the schooner under way again, Mr. Maddocks," said the chief, after the body had sunk from sight, and the order was obeyed with alacrity, for the crew were becoming alarmed at the near approach of the fleet.

"Which way shall I head sir?" asked Maddocks, as the craft once more felt the breeze upon her canvas and was gaining headway.

"We must meet Mr. Carter in the Mischief, you know, Maddocks, so the fleet shall not run us off; I will take the helm."

So saying Duke Gregory sprung to the wheel, and rapidly issuing his orders he brought the bows around until they pointed north-north-east, where before they had been pointing due south.

The crew looked on with surprise.

What strange freak had the mad brain of their chief conceived now?

Instantly, seeing the course of the schooner, a number of signals were sent up from the frigate, the result of which was that the Dolphin held on after The Disowned, while the other vessels scattered so as to cut her off from continuing down the bay.

This maneuver on the part of the Mad Mariner seemed reckless in the extreme, and Maddocks volunteered:

"It will be blind luck, sir, if we ever get to sea, for there are several vessels-of-war lying across the mouth of the Chesapeake, from Cape Charles to Cape Henry, sir."

"Well?"

"Three of those vessels can continue the chase after us, while one goes down to report and fully blockade the outlet to sea."

"My dear Maddocks, I know what I am about."

"Carter awaits us at the island below, and yonder storm will aid me to elude this fleet."

"As for the fleet below, I care not for it."

Maddocks glanced in the direction indicated, and saw that black clouds were rolling up from the westward, and that there was every prospect of a severe storm.

"I verily believe that either Heaven or hell aids the man, and I'll dismiss all fear, for he'll pull through," muttered the officer, going forward among the men to still a certain uneasiness he saw cropping out.

But his words had no effect with a few of the men, who felt certain of capture, through the foolhardiness of their captain, and being deserters from the very fleet in pursuit, they knew that their lives would terminate at the end of a rope very suddenly if taken.

Hence, with dark looks, and darker words they conversed together forward, the ringleaders, gradually drawing volunteers to their side.

CHAPTER XLII.

QUELLING A MUTINY.

Mr. Duke Gregory saw what was going on forward, no look or sign of his indicated it, until Maddocks came aft and said in a low tone:

"There is going to be trouble, sir."

"Yes, but I know the schooner's seaworthiness."

"I do not refer to the schooner, sir."

"What then?"

"The men."

"What ails them?"

"They are mutinous."

"What?"

"They threaten trouble."

"Like the storm, it will blow over."

"I fear not, sir."

"I say we'll ride safely through the storm, the fleet, and the mutineers."

"I hope so, sir."

"I know so, Maddocks."

"You can see, sir, that some thirty men have left the guns and gone forward."

"Without your orders?"

"Yes, sir."

"You should not have allowed it."

"I could not prevent it, sir, so I came aft to report to you."

"Is this stern pivot-gun loaded?"

"Yes, sir."

"What with?"

"Solid shot, sir."

"Quietly put in a load of grape, too."

Maddocks did as ordered, and did it without attracting the attention of the crew.

"It is done, sir."

"Now go forward and order the men back to their guns."

"If they refuse?"

"Tell them it is my order."

"If they still refuse, sir?"

"Tell them that I am not a man to stand trifling."

"I fear it will do no good, sir."

"Then come aft and join me."

Maddocks walked forward to obey, while Duke Gregory still retained the wheel.

The situation of the schooner was now most critical.

The Dolphin had squared away directly east from her position, when the Mad Mariner had changed his course, and as the Disowned was running north, north east, it would bring them together at a certain angle, unless the Mad Mariner changed his course again.

Then, too, the frigate was heading pretty much as was the Dolphin, and the three vessels were making toward what seemed a common center, while the brig was running south-south-east, to get below and astern of the schooner, and a swift-sailing corvette was running on her former course, to warn the fleet at the mouth of the Chesapeake, and thus cut the Mad Mariner off from getting to sea.

What the motive of the Mad Mariner was in thus doubling on his course, no one could understand, unless it was to make the fleet believe he had to return up the bay for some purpose, and then, dodging his pursuers in the approaching storm, to head down the Chesapeake, keep his rendezvous with the Mischief, and then hide in the numerous inlets and among the islands of the bay, until some dark night, when he could run the blockading fleet gantlet into the Atlantic.

There were three-fourths of the crew, and even more, who cared not to take such desperate chances, and thought, as the schooner had been so gallantly leading the fleet, their chief should have given up his rendezvous with the Mischief, and, with the American flag and signals on board, calmly run out to sea past the blockading fleet, who would believe him to be the United States schooner-of-war Arrow.

These dissenters had congregated together under a leader, who quickly found allies in leadership, and were plotting to go aft and demand that the Mad Mariner either run on out of the Chesapeake, knowing the speed of the schooner would enable her to overhaul, pass and avoid the Dolphin, or to resign the command of The Disowned to them.

Feeling confident that, though the majority held back, they would not side with Duke Gregory, the mutineers were all ready for their move aft when Maddocks approached.

"Men, I gave no orders for you to leave your guns, so return to them," he said, sternly.

"Mr. Maddocks, we don't like the desperate chances the captain takes with our lives," the ringleader answered boldly.

"He takes the same with his own."

"But he is not right in the head, sir; his troubles have driven him mad, and we don't wonder, for we all know now, from his own lips, who he is, and it is no wonder he is crazy; but that don't help us, so we intend to remonstrate."

"You will find that he is captain of this craft, lads, so I advise you to go to your guns and not rouse him."

"He is one sir, and we many."

"You'll find him the lion and yourselves the lambs; take my word for it."

"We'll risk it, Mr. Maddocks, for capture to us means death."

"Go forward to your guns, men, and let me hear no more of this!"

"No, sir, we will do no such thing, and you can go aft and give the Mad Captain a hint that he had better put about and run for open water."

"It will be the worst for you."

"We'll take the chances," was the bold reply.

Without another word Martin Maddocks turned away.

"Well, sir?" quietly asked the chief.

"They refuse to obey, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Captain Duke, they are bent on mischief."

"They shall have it."

"They say they will make no demonstration if you will put about and run for open water."

"Won't they?"

"No, sir."

"I am sorry I cannot accommodate them."

"Is that gun all ready to fire?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then stand here near the wheel, where you can take hold when I need you—ah! that was a good shot," and the Mad Mariner smiled as a shot from the Dolphin flew a few feet above his head.

Maddocks thought it was a bad shot, but said nothing, as he quietly took his stand near the wheel.

The nearness of the Dolphin's shot evidently hastened the men in their determination, for they came marching aft in a body three abreast.

Suddenly, ere they had advanced a dozen steps, the Mad Mariner's voice was heard:

"Halt! to your guns there!"

"No, captain, we wish to demand that—" began the leader.

"Silence! I command this vessel."

"To your guns, I say!"

They had halted at his first command, and listened to his words, but now, at the order of their leader, again moved forward.

"Hold!" came in startling, trumpet tones.

But on they moved.

Springing to the pivot gun, as quick as a flash of light, by his own gigantic strength alone he swung it round until the muzzle covered the head of the advancing mutineers.

They saw their danger and attempted to scatter.

But he was no man to parley, and in a second's time the fuse was applied, the huge gun burst forth with an explosion that shook the schooner from keel to truck, and the burbling mass of iron went howling forward, tearing splinters from the deck, and masts, making rents in the bulwarks, and leaving a score of men dead and dying in the path of the death storm.

Ere the smoke had died away cries for mercy arose on every side, and above all was heard the clarion notes of the Mad Mariner:

"All hands ahoy to take in sail! Lively, lads, lively, for the storm is upon us."

As one man the crew, that escaped the iron tornado, sprung to work, and the schooner was stripped to her storm-sails in an instant of time, just as the gale burst into terrific fury upon the sea, shutting out from sight the pursuers of the Mad Mariner.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MUTINEERS' FATE.

THE discharge on the schooner, of the stern pivot thirty-two, told plainly on board the pursuers that there was trouble for the Mad Mariner among his crew.

But whatever after opinion they had on the fleet is not known, as the storm, just then struck The Disowned and hid it from sight, giving them a warning to take in canvas as quickly as possible.

This the respective vessels did just in time, and in looking out for their own safety momentarily neglected the fugitive craft, which, as soon as all was ship-shape on board to meet the gale, was nowhere visible in the storm and darkness.

As to the crew of The Disowned, so sudden and unexpected had been the movements of their mad captain, that the gun was pointed upon the mutineers before his intention was known.

Then all but a few expected that he would again order them to disperse, while others believed that he would not fire, and still more, that if he did the solid shot would not do a great deal of damage, for they did not know of the extra charge of grape which Maddocks had put into the gun.

Nor did they hasten, those that did spring aside, as they did not believe the piece could be fired under a minute.

The herculean task of the chief, in turning the gun alone, for these were not the days of the invention of wheels within wheels, that make great weights featherweights to move, had won a burst of admiration from the reckless young men; but ere it had been fairly uttered the match was applied and the iron storm burst upon them.

One or two, outside of the mutineers, had suffered by the discharge, while half a score of the remonstrators had escaped; but then the

law of circumstances often makes it so, even that the guilty escape and the innocent are punished.

As if ignoring the thought that further trouble would continue, the Mad Mariner had ordered his schooner stripped to meet the storm, and nimbly the men had sprung to work, now more thoroughly afraid of their desperate chief, than of the tempest and pursuing vessels.

When the gale struck the schooner the Mad Mariner was at the wheel, met it boldly, and then deliberately squared away before it, running directly toward the fleet.

"Keep a sharp look out, lads; for those vessels," he ordered in cheery tones, as though the vessels to be looked for were friends instead of foes, and nothing had transpired on board of a disagreeable nature.

"Ay, ay, sir," rung out a chorus of voices, and every eye was strained through the darkness and mist of the storm to watch for the fleet, while Duke Gregory still held his vessel on her course, though the nimble craft bounded like a mad racer.

"A sail off starboard bow, sir," said Maddocks.

"I see her; it is the Dolphin," was the calm reply.

"Sail ho! off starboard bow five points," called out a man forward.

"Ay, ay, it is the frigate."

"Sail ho! Dead ahead!"

"Ay, ay, sir; it is the brig," and the schooner's course was changed so as to run astern of the frigate and across the bows of the brig.

It was evident that the schooner lying low in the water, and with only her lower sails set, had not been discovered from the decks of either of her pursuers, and, to be still better hidden, the Mad Mariner suddenly wore round, until the bows pointed across the frigate's stern, and after holding on this way for a short distance, again fell off before the gale, stripped his vessel of all canvas, and under bare poles drove by the brig within a couple of cables' length, leaving the fleet beating up against the storm, hoping to hem the pirate in on the eastern shore.

The daring, and masterly manner in which the Mad Mariner eluded the fleet, passing within a quarter of a mile of each vessel, again won the wildest applause of his crew, while the dead and dying forms scattered amidst ships, warned them of the danger of mutinying against his authority.

Once free from the fleet, and the Mad Mariner said:

"Go forward, Mr. Maddocks, and have those dead and wounded mutineers brought aft."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"And if the leader were not killed, bring him here in double irons!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

Maddocks quickly obeyed, wondering what freak the mad captain was going to play now.

He gave the orders to the crew not at the guns, and one by one the dead and wounded were borne aft and laid in a row across the quarter-deck, fronting the chief, who still held the wheel, as if anxious to keep constantly in busy action to drown thought.

The two aides to the ringleader, were found to have been instantly killed; but the main mover of the mutiny had escaped death, and terrified at the storm he had aroused, was attempting to do his duty with avidity.

Upon him Maddocks laid a heavy hand.

"You are wanted by the captain."

"Me!"

"Yes, you."

"What does he want?" asked the trembling wretch.

"He will tell you."

"I believe I would rather have been killed than meet his eye."

"I warned you, and you would not heed."

"Would to God I had, for I fear something dreadful is going to happen."

"Perhaps some of your friends would like to rescue you?" sneered Maddocks.

"No, no: that mad captain could come forward and cut off our heads one by one with his cutlass, and none of us would resist."

"I believe you; here be'sen, put this man in double irons."

The boatswain immediately obeyed, and the chains, as he hebbled aft, made an ominous echo in his heart, and the hearts of his shipmates.

He was halted by Maddocks directly in

front of the Mad Mariner, who relinquished the wheel to the helmsman, and folding his arms upon his broad breast stepped forward and gazed into the face of the ringleader, and then down upon the dead and wounded.

"All hands aboy! to witness burial," came the stern order, and at a trot the crew came aft.

"Bo'sen, throw these mutineers into the sea!"

The boatswain seized a dead man in his arms, and silently hurled him over the bulworks into the mad waters.

Then, one by one they were thrown over until the line of living was reached.

There were five of these, and all sorely wounded.

"All done, sir," sung out the boatswain.

"I ordered those mutineers thrown into the sea."

"Am I to be obeyed, sir?"

The boatswain and all gazed upon the Mad Mariner in horror.

"The living ones, sir?"

In faltering tones came the words from the lips of the boatswain.

"Yes; dead and living; it will wash the stain of mutiny from this craft."

The stern response was said unflinchingly.

The boatswain hesitated, glanced at his shipmates, and then at his captain.

What he saw in both glances was enough to make him at once obey the command of the leader.

Down he stooped, and the first of the living mutineers was thrown overboard.

Then followed another, too badly wounded to realize his fate, and a third who shrieked wildly for mercy.

One by one they followed, until the leader alone remained.

Upon him all eyes were now turned, as he stood between two seamen, for his trembling limbs could not sustain his weight unaided.

"You, sir, shall share the same fate."

The stern lips that issued the order never quivered, and then from the ring-leader broke a plaintive cry for mercy, which ended in a shriek.

But the Mad Mariner still stood like a statue, his arms folded upon his broad breast, his eyes seeming to read every face before him.

"Overboard with him!"

Not an instant did the boatswain and his men he had summoned for the duty hesitate; but seizing the shrieking wretch in their arms, they hurled him into the seething waters.

"Go forward to your posts, men!"

Like a frightened drove of cattle the crew obeyed, while the schooner, wholly washed, as the mad captain had said, of the stain of mutiny, drove along before the terrific storm.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DEATH'S GANTLET.

By surprise of the morning following the night of the chase, storm and mutiny, The Disowned, under reefed canvas, was driving along at a fearful pace, and heading for a group of islands on the eastern shore of Maryland, that lie to the north-east of the mouth of the Potomac river.

She had made a tremendous run during the night, and was now in the vicinity of her rendezvous with the yacht Mischief, and all hands were on the look-out for the little craft.

The tapering topmast was soon sighted over a wooded island, and around it The Disowned swept at race-horse speed, and ran into a quiet haven, dropping anchor almost broadside to with the Mischief.

Carl Carter and his crew gave her a hearty cheer, and going on board the schooner went into the cabin with the chief.

A moment after he came out and gave orders for the stores and men of the Mischief to be at once transferred to the schooner, and for Maddocks to join his chief and himself in the cabin.

"Mr. Maddocks, you have no kindred ties, I believe, to bind you to any land or place?" queried the Mad Mariner.

"None, sir, I am alone in the world."

"Then you are willing to sail with me on my cruise, be it where it may?"

"I am, sir."

"Then I make you my first officer, and, as you are better acquainted with the men than I am, please go on deck and order in here the two whom you think would be best fitted for the positions of second and third lieutenants."

Maddocks glanced at Carl Carter in sur-

prise, and he, turning pale, glanced at his chief.

"Have I done aught to offend you, sir, or that you should lose trust in me?" faltered Carl Carter.

The chief made no reply, but quietly paced to and fro until Martin Maddocks returned accompanied by two fine-looking young men, with fearless, resolute faces, and looking every inch thorough seamen.

"Captain Duke, this is Mark Moran, sir, a brave man and true seaman; and this, sir, is Brete Banning, of whom I can say the same," said Maddocks, again glancing at the pale faced Carl.

"Mr. Moran, I make you Second Luff of this schooner; and, Mr. Banning, I make you my Third Lieutenant."

"You know my demands of officers and men, so please let me have no cause to regret my promotion of you."

Both men looked surprised; their faces flushed with pleasure and pride, and they bowed low, one after the other remarking:

"I shall do my duty, Captain Duke, to the best of my ability."

"Now, gentlemen, I wish to say that I know that my esteemed friend, Mr. Carter, here, has ties of kindred, to prevent me from taking him with me."

"He has done his duty, nobly; but I am known as the Mad Mariner now, and this is to be a mad cruise of mine, so I order him back to his home, to his wife and child."

"Carl, the yacht I give to you, with the little home in Massachusetts; also this case of precious stones, which you will find you can turn into gold."

"Go back to your family, sell the little cottage, and far away from scenes where you are known, seek for yourself and yours, a new home and an honorable name, which you cannot have while following my fortunes."

"See, I have written this letter to the commodore on board the frigate."

"See that he gets it, as soon as you land in Baltimore, if you return that way; if not, send it to him."

"It reads simply, as you see:

"'Branded by a birth that was dishonorable, covered with ignominy by my own kindred, hunted down by those who were my brother officers, shunned by all honorable men, outlawed, and a price set upon my head by my own Government, with no land to call my own, I am driven to seek upon the wide seas a home, and throw to the breeze my sable flag in defiance of the navies of the world.'"

"DUKE GREGORY,

"The Mad Mariner."

"Now, gentlemen, come with me on deck."

All silently followed the white-faced, stern man, whom in their inmost hearts they deeply pitied.

"Men," and the ringing voice of the Mad Mariner, gained instant attention from all.

"I am going to send the yacht back under Mr. Carter, as he does not go with me on my cruise, and if there is one man on my vessel who does not care to follow my fortunes on the deep, let him now declare so, and he can go in the craft which we leave in a few minutes."

"Be frank and say so, for I want no cowards, no men afraid of death, come it in any form, to serve on my vessel."

"Speak now, or not at all."

He glanced his eagle eyes over the sea of faces, and there was a movement among the crew.

Then a man stepped boldly out and said:

"Thank you, sir; I would like to go in the yacht."

"And I, sir."

"And I."

And thus it went on until six men stood in line.

"Mr. Carter, you have just a good crew," and the Mad Mariner smiled.

Then he continued:

"Mr. Maddocks, give each of those men a purse of gold."

The orders were obeyed, the stores were soon transferred, and with farewells and a full heart, Carl Carter went on board the Mischief, and felt thankful to Duke Gregory for saving him from a further life of crime.

A moment after the two vessels swung apart, the sable flag was dipped in a farewell salute to the stars and stripes at the peak of the yacht, and away sped The Disowned on her seaward course, while the Mischief headed back to Baltimore.

Straight toward the mouth of the Chesapeake went The Disowned, and suddenly from the mast-head came the cry:

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway?"

"Dead astern, sir."

"Ay, ay; it is the Dolphin, yes, and the frigate and brig too, and they have sighted us," said the Mad Mariner, coolly.

But he kept The Disowned on her course, without an increase of sail, until he saw that they were gaining upon him, when he shook out the reefs in the fore and mainsails, and sent the schooner forward at a pace that more than held her own.

"The yacht is standing directly across the frigate's bows, sir," said Mark Moran, the new second officer.

"By Neptune! but you are right, sir," cried the Mad Mariner.

"He is signaling the frigate, sir."

"True; Carl Carter is determined to take the risk, and deliver my letter in person; he is a noble man."

And so it was, for Carl Carter had boldly determined to say that the schooner had brought him to, and bade him carry a letter to the Commodore of the Chesapeake fleet, from the Mad Mariner.

The letter was received by the commodore, who kept on in chase, allowing the Mischief to go on her way, little dreaming that there was any connection between the pretty pleasure yacht, as he believed it to be, and the daring pirate.

All through the day the chase continued, and after nightfall a severe storm swept down again upon the Chesapeake; but the schooner and her pursuers held their course, though under shortened sail.

When nearing Cape Charles, the fleet, though over a league astern, and out of range, began to fire from their heavy guns furiously, the frigate even discharging a couple of broadsides, and then all keeping up a running fire, as though hoping to damage the schooner.

"They are firing to warn the blockading fleet," said the Mad Mariner, with a grim smile.

Then he added:

"It will do no good, for my prow is pointed for open water now, and to open water we go."

He called the men to their guns, and soon after the glimmering lights of the fleet appeared in sight, ranged across the entrance to the bay.

"There are six in sight," he said, calmly. "But with this gale from the northward, I have no fear of them."

And he proved his words by holding straight on for the Atlantic.

But the fleet was now alert; for the guns above had warned them, and now the three vessels in pursuit were sending up rockets rapidly to place them on their guard.

With no light visible on board, The Disowned rushed for the blue waters of the Atlantic.

But suddenly the Heavens joined in the loud cannonading, and a vivid flash of lightning displayed the gallant schooner to all on board the blockading fleet.

Instantly they headed toward a common center, and soon their guns opened fiercely upon the flying craft, for the corvette had already made known who was the commander of the captured schooner.

Loudly, rapidly, and savagely the guns pealed, and the iron hail hurtled through the air.

And fearlessly the little schooner replied.

Once she was obliged to change her course, or receive a broadside of a ship of the line, and she squared away directly before the wind.

Then suddenly her course was again changed, and she put back toward the Chesapeake, and all felt that her capture was certain.

All the time firing, she ran back until the frigate Dolphin, and brig were in range, and upon each one of these she luffed up and sent a broadside.

Then her course was again changed straight for open water, though now, surrounded by half a score of huge foes, some of them within a mile of her, it seemed impossible for the Mad Mariner to escape.

But suddenly the heavens, as if anxious to join in the mad chase, turned loose their pealing artillery, and sent down vivid flames of red lightning, to suddenly cease, and let the blackness of the darkest night fall upon the sea.

And with the ending of the thunder the last gun was fired upon the schooner, while, for the moment the fleet had to look to their own safety, for the tempest was upon them with tenfold fury.

But they rode out the storm, and cruised landward and seaward over the wild waters, until the dawn appeared.

Then every eye anxiously scanned the waters in search of the schooner, or of a wreck, for they had believed it impossible she should escape unmarred the fierce tempest.

But nowhere visible was the daring craft, and at last one feeling pervaded the hearts of all who had been in the hot chase and hotter fight, and that was that the Disowned had gone down beneath the waves, and carried with her the Mad Mariner and his crew.

CONCLUSION.

TRUE to his promise, Carl Carter had delivered the letter of the Mad Mariner to the American commander, and then, disposing of the Mischief for a good price in Baltimore, had gone, *via* stage, to his home in Massachusetts.

Selling the cottage of poor Clarice Bond, Carl had gone, with his wife and child to other scenes, where he invested in a swift coasting schooner and plied a lucrative trade, until the breaking out of the 1812 war, when he became noted as a privateersman, and his captures and escapes are the talk to this day of the bold fishermen on the iron-bound coast of Maine.

And Hillside Hall, the old house of the Gregorys, held for years one owner.

That one was Grace Townsend, whom all men seemed to fear and shun, and who lived on to old maidenhood alone with her servants until she had passed three-score years.

Then she died one night of storm, though seemingly not ill, and Hillside Hall was left in her will, with all the rest of her property, to found an asylum for unfortunate children.

Of The Disowned nothing more was heard after that fearful night in the Chesapeake, when she boldly ran into the death gantlet, and yet there were many seamen that said the Mad Mariner had not gone down that night, but had escaped, and was none other than the commander of the famous Crewless Corsair of the Gulf of Mexico.

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